

Femme Fatales

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ZOMBIES ON WHEELS

MONIQUE PARENT

CLEOPATRA 2525

THE BABES OF
BEASTMASTER

Volume 6 Number 17



CULT CLASSIC: THE SORE LOSERS

Femme Fatales

Contents

VOLUME 5 NUMBER 17

The Lascivious Ladies of Horror, Fantasy & Science Fiction

JUNE 9, 2006

Femme Fatales routinely splits into a dichotomous pattern: sure, we interview actresses who are linked to "A" movie commerce (check-out last year's front cover stories). But we've also pledged our fidelity to independently-produced (low budget) films that are resistant to economizing on creativity. As evoked by our early issues, we have often interviewed actresses who were on the cusp of mainstream celebrity, including Reese Witherspoon, Sherry Stringfield, et al. bottom line, we initially profited the aforementioned actresses when they were developing their apprenticeship on B-movies. However, we should add a disclaimer: fledgling filmmakers assume that freedom from corporate Hollywood affords them uncompromising autonomy. Guess again.

Upon editing **HOT WAX ZOMBIES**, we went the festival route, recalls director Mike Roush. "We wanted to determine which scenes worked, what didn't work and which jokes clicked. But we had two strikes against us. Exploitation films are antithetical to festival regulations, so we had to trim to a very tight runtime—only a little bit of T&A. Our film is also a comedy, a somewhat depressing genre when you apply for festival screenings. But we were finally approved and toured with the film in New York, Baltimore—and, oh yeah, we had another strike against us: **HOT WAX ZOMBIES** had to follow a movie called **RADIATION** that one ended with a guy drowning himself in the Mediterranean! A real nice opening for our weekly comedy."

"As this issue of FF goes to press, we're reediting the movie's musical tracks and adding more T&A for commercial appeal. We're making ourselves available for the Cannes market, and negotiating a deal for the Midnight Madness circuit. Look, this is all an education but I don't want to get stuck in exploitation film. However, as long as I'm there, I'll keep shooting way off center. My next one is going to be called **NAKED FIREPOWER**. We may very well shoot that baby in 3-D!"

For another chronicle on low-budget filmmaking, check out **THE SORE LOSERS** (page 16). Anyway, it's a Duet Page for Jenny, sake for me. Bill George



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ATTRACTIONS F A T A L E

By Dan Scafferotti

■ Joan Collins is back on the big screen and still heater up the batch barometer. The former horror film veteran (1972's *TALES FROM THE CRYPT*), who vamped prime time as *DYNASTY*'s "Alison Armstrong Colby," has been cast in *THE FLINTSTONES IN VIVA ROCK VEGAS*. The actress has been cast as Pearl Sieghoepe, mother of a young hewer (named Wilma) who digs a rock quarry working staff (named Fred Flintstone). This prequel finds Bedrock's most famous couples in a prototypical joust in the hottest rock resort on the continent. Emmy Award-winning Kristen Johnston plays Wilma and Jane Krakowski appears as Barney Rubble's future fiancée, Betty O'Shale. Fred and Barney are played, respectively, by Mark Addy and Steve Baldwin. Gosh, a Baldwin playing a moronic cave dweller—that's a stretch.

■ A breed of aliens, called Psyllids, do the "world dominion" thing in *BATTLEFIELD EARTH*. Based on L. Ron Hubbard's book, the \$80 million opus is directed by Roger Christian. A toy franchise developed for the film includes fixable dolls sculpted into the likeness of Tera, the braying extraterrestrial played by John Travolta. We'll pass on that one. If we're talking about serious action figures, how about merchandising deals on the supporting cast, what with Mena-Joez Groze (LA POSTIERE), Sabina Kamenit (Shelly Webster) on *THE CROW*, STEINWAY TO HEAVEN) and Kelly Preston (TWINS, AMAZON WOMEN ON THE MOON).

■ Find out if you're no stranger to the genre, with credits that include *LAKE PLACID*, *ARMY OF DARK-*



Rock with them: *THE FLINTSTONES IN VIVA ROCK VEGAS*—Mark Addy (Fred), Kristen Johnston (Wilma), Jane Krakowski (Betty), Stephen Baldwin (Barney)

NESS, *FRANKENSTEIN UNBOUND*, et al.—has been cast as *DELIVERING MILO*. The fantasy film, shot in New York, is directed by Nick Castle, who played the Sheep (aka Michael Myers) in *HALLOWEEN* (1978). The premise involves an angel (Albert Finney) who must persuade a certain offspring to articulate the words, "I want to be born." Fonda and Campbell Scott play the unborn child's parents.

■ You can go home again, notes Brenda Stevens, who posed for the cover of *FF #1*. "I just did a press conference for *Scream: Queens*. The Musical which, thanks in large part to the *Female Fatale* cover

story [84], has gotten a second run in L.A. and on a much bigger stage I was interviewed as the token original scream queen."

Earlier this year, the actress was in Iowa shooting *REAL TIME*, based on director Max Allan Collins' short story, "Inconvenience Mart." When a store robbery turns violent, the perpetrators take prisoners—including Stevens. "I'm a cop on maternity leave," she explains. "I'm seven months pregnant when taken hostage. So it was two fists for me, one was being pregnant and the other playing a cop. So I got to work with a lot of guns and learned how cage shoot. I was the hero, I took out both the robbers at the end of the movie. Max and I have previously worked together on a thriller titled *MOMMY* [81]."

Reprising her roots, Stevens posed for a *Female Fatale* pictorial that reunited her with other *SLUMBER PARTY MASSACRE* vets (Parts I through 3), including Heidi Kozak. She subsequently flew to San Francisco for a role in *THE REAPER*, produced and written by Michael Stewart. "That film was a real throwback to early '70s slasher movies," says Stevens. "While taping it on a camping trip, I turned out to be the first victim of a masked psycho-killer. I haven't screamed, run and died quite so vigorously since *SLUMBER PARTY MASSACRE*. I'm kind of doing a Drew

Barrymore turn like in *SCREAM* where everyone is supposed to think that I'm the star of the movie, but then I get killed off on page 13. From then on, you realize that anything can happen. I felt a little strange going backwards and doing a victim role, especially after playing such a strong female character in *REAL TIME*, but I thought, 'What the heck.' As I was doing it, I realized I'm really good at this. If it all came back to me, the feeling and the getting and the running and the terror, it was really invigorating. It's directed by Lory-Michael Ringquist [JOEPLY DISTURBED]."

Upon wrapping *THE REAPER*, Stevens reported to Full Moon studios for a plan role in *SIDESHOW*, a thriller directed by Fred Olen Ray. "It's a very dark, bizarre oddity, sort of *FREAKS* meets *SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES*," she reads. "I play a fortune teller, a carnival who predicts the fate of these five bratty teens who do, indeed, meet the fates that they so dearly deserve."

■ Enter the year, Maxim model Laurie Wallace took a pose as a FF pinup (8 14). The term's photo, which depicted the blonde beauty as a tropical castaway, drew lots of mail and the attention of some producers. As a result, Wallace has recently been cast as GODDESS "It's an adaptation of a popular comic book," says Wallace. "I admire the strength of the central character. She's a warrior in communion with nature. And I can genuinely relate to that."

■ Any hookerling, who cut her comedic teeth on "coming of age" sagas (*CLUELESS*, *FAST TIMES AT REDMONT HIGH*), is a triple threat on *LOSER*—we're talking writer, director and producer. The story involves scholarship student Paul Tanneck (Jason Biggs), the student body's nearly punishing big who turns into a regional celebrity when he turns a veterinary hospital into "petty contest." More important for Tanneck is that his budding popularity is drawing him closer to dream girl Dora Diamond, who's having an affair with her English Lit professor. The femme fatale is played by Mena Suvari, the *AMERICAN BEAUTY* who luxuriated in the latter film's rose petal bath. She was also cast in *CARRIE II: THE MADE* (7 11) as the teen who takes a headliner of the school road.

■ Marilyn Monroe fans will be thrilled with *The Marilyn Encyclopedia* (Overlook Press), a comprehen-

When, get a room, you feel it's John Travolta, as the tyrannical Tera, and model spouse Kelly Preston as his psychotic secretary in *BATTLEFIELD EARTH*.



give back by Adam Vizor, inundated with both b&w and color photos, the hefty volume is an indispensable reference on the late actress: entries include everyone from Ann-Margret—whose 20th Century-Fox speculated would mount the sex goddess mantle vacated by Monroe—to Marie Van Doren, one of the more successful MM clones. The exhaustive research documents films that eluded Monroe, including *BORN YESTERDAY* and *BREAKFAST AT TIFFANY'S*.

"My initial interest in Marilyn was when I first fell under her gaze from the movie screen," recounts Vizor from his home in Britain. "One look was enough to see that there are seven sinners—and then there's Marilyn, the non plus ultra of the femme fatale to coin a linguistically challenging phrase. When Overlook Press approached me about writing *The Marilyn Encyclopedia*, I jumped at the chance. The book is an attempt to bring together a one-stop resource on Marilyn's life and work, containing conflicting theories and views about what she did, information on her movies, the people she knew and places she frequented, there's also gossip, scandal and many unusual photographs revealing aspects of Marilyn that are not so well known. Marilyn's rivety fans can weigh up for themselves the truths and fictions that have been written about her over the years...and they make their own judgments about the controversial issues in her life."

● Producer Val Franco has just wrapped *VAMPIRE LESBIAN KICK BOXERS*. "It's kind of an homage to Russ Meyer," says Franco. Shooting the production in New York and Los Angeles, she's co-directing with Tom Caserio, a New York performance artist. Franco tapped Lisa Lukers, a beautiful blonde Australian model, to play the leechthirsty Melissa Danna. "She's very female and got a take on this character right away," enthuses Franco.

Drop-dead gorgeous Rachael Roberts (7'10") plays a role that she defines as "neither a leechbear nor a lesbian nor a vampire. I do a comedic turn as a porn actress who hook-up with a producer. It was a nice contrast to a couple of dramatic roles I recently wrapped, including one called *FOUR DEADLY REASONS*, where I play a thick-

The ravishing Rachael Roberts recently shot *GIRLFRIENDS 2*, a Playboy video. "When I do a movie, I get asked only if it's deved or video-on-demand. I'll prefer 'sensation' over T&A."



skinned hostage."

●Once upon a time, Hollywood stereotyped witches as butt-ugly crones (sample Margaret Hamilton in *THE WIZARD OF OZ*). Circumventing convention, porcelain beauty Kim Novak was cast in *BELL, BOOK AND CANDLE* (1968) as Gillian Holroyd, a contemporary sorceress who officiates management of an elf store. Adhering to tradition, her companion is Pycrochet, a black cat. As a witch, Holroyd is devoid of romantic inclinations; nevertheless, she casts a love spell on Shepherd Henderson (James Stewart) to derail his pending marriage to her college nemes-



↑ Granted as "Columbia Pictures" answer to Marilyn Mason, Kim Novak reunited with *VERTIGO* co-star Jimmy Stewart in *BELL, BOOK AND CANDLE* (L, reissued for its DVD debut). The 1968 release was not a boxoffice success.

sis. The enchanted Henderson, suddenly smitten with the witch, immediately postpones his wedding; but Holroyd suffers the very human consequences of emotional vulnerability. The film was a reunion for Novak and Stewart; they had been initially introduced in Alfred Hitchcock's *VERTIGO*, released earlier the same year. Columbia TriStar Home Entertainment has just released the wide screen, DVD version of the seldom-seen *BELL*, which includes the original trailer.

●Jacqueline Lovell, the blonde bombshell who often made Full Moon's horror films (*THE KILLER EYE*, *HIDEOUTS*, *HEAD OF THE FAMILY*), offered her employers the option to shoot *Bug Boy*. But Full Moon passed on Lovell's preferred script, opting the scenario was "too weird," keep in mind this is the film unit that historically tailors its commerce to movies about articulate, disembodied heads, over-inflated heads, shrunken heads, and fur balls. Pitching the project to prospective financiers, Lovell and company produced sev-

eral half-hour segments which were broadcast on cable access channels. "Bug Boy's parents had unprotected sex outside on a bugy day," Lovell explains, "and some bugs jump in and end up in the DNA. When he's born, the title character is part bug, part human. He acts like a bug, he has bug instincts. And he's just honest about things."

"Since I've dedicated my life to Christ, I thought we could give it a Christian sort of feel," continues Lovell. "We're trying to get the message of God out because there is a lot of crap on TV. Maybe we'll make a Christian out of Bug Boy." Unfortunately, budgetary constraints prohibited the development of animation technology that Lovell is confident would "sell" the concept to investors. "On the cable show," she says, "I'm playing the nice Christian girl. She dreams about this Bug Boy, who's supposed to teach the world about God. But, in the proposed movie, I'm like this psycho who gets the bugs to start eating all the plants so

I can take over the world. We're having a Christian company will pick it up as something for kids."

●TNT is adapting Cervantes' Don Quixote for the tube. John Lithgow, as the erstwhile knight, is paired-up with Bob Hoskins as faithful servant, Sancho Panza. Vanessa Williams is cast as Dulcinea, the village wench who appears to the demented Don. Isabella Rossellini plays the Duchess.

●The work of so-far scribe Philip K. Dick has been adapted into *TOTAL RECALL*, *BLADE RUNNER*, etc. *IMPOSTER*, based on one of his short stories, is about a married couple's dilemma; it seems one of them may turn out to be cyborg. Madeleine Stowe and Gary Sinise play the honeymoons.

●Last December, tragedy struck B-actress/teashy dive Julie Parlon (*THE BARE TITS PROJECT*). The last thing she remembered, before waking up in a hospital ICU, was leaving home for a Los Angeles club engagement. It's been presumed that a feral dog Parlon fell asleep at the wheel of her car. Ap-

parently thrown 50 feet from the vehicle upon impact, she suffered a concussion and severe facial lacerations. "The driver's side of my car was completely smashed in," says Parlon. "I don't know how my seat belt came undone, and I don't know how my window was suddenly open. I do know that if I hadn't been thrown from my car, I wouldn't be sitting right now. I'm currently undergoing physical therapy."

"I've been toying with the idea of writing a book for years, but I wasn't anything I planned on doing until retirement. While healing from the accident, I got so incredibly bored with nothing to do—I can't stand not working—I figured writing would be a productive way for me to occupy my time." The book will serve as counsel for young women who are broaching the singlelife profession.

A tip from Dennis's Hot Drive, notes that a fund has been set up, in Julie Parlon's name, to help pay for her hospital bills. Send contributions to Julie Parlon Fund, Acct #179-1495649, c/o Washington Mutual Bank, 2701 Wilshire Blvd Santa Monica, CA 90403.

●Marty Munding plays the *OTHER FOR TWO*, in more homage to Roman Polanski's *AMEZ-VOUS LES FEMMES*, the tatty underground diva is spirited away to a medical check-up. It turns out the doc is inspecting mesmerizing Munding as a prospective meal for her hungry wife. (The film is shot as a "horror" cookbook in a cinema verite style à la *BLAIR WITCH*). The black comedy, also featuring Bill Hefner and Mia Copie, is scheduled for a summer release.

●Newsweek Heidi Christine is featured in *Beduction Cinema's MISTRESS OF FRANKENSTEIN*. The model was initially bitten by the acting bug when she spent a couple of seasons as a pimple warrior in Florida's Renaissance Festival. She subsequently constructed a web site (www.heidichristine.com) which was visited by *Beduction* producers. "They called and offered me the job," recalls Christine.

It seems that good ol' Igor plumps a lesbian nymphomaniac's brain in Mrs. Frankenstein's skull. "And she goes around seducing all these women, and my character—a naive Southern girl, just off the bus—is among the girls she seduces," said Christine. "We had to film our nude love scene three different times because me and her were really getting into it. It was funny. I was in German *Posthouse* and stuff like that, so I wasn't nervous about the nudity. Being a B-movie queen is about having a killer body right? Anyway, it's a hilarious film. It's got comedy and sexuality." □



Heidi Christian, posing for Duane Pezosa, is seduced by the **MISTRESS OF FRANKENSTEIN**. **STEIN**: "We had to film our nude love scene three times because we really got into it. And we have a very sexy cut-throat scene!"

Cleopatra 2525

FROM THE PRODUCERS OF "XENA:" A SCI-FI SERIES SPECULATES THAT KARATE AND CLEAVAGE ARE SHAPES OF THINGS TO COME!

BY FREDERICK C. SZEBIN

"I haven't seen my analyst in 200 years. He was a strict Freudian. If I had been going all this time, I'd probably be cured by now."

Woody Allen
("Miles Monroe")
SLEEPER (1973)

With their foundation shows **HERCULES**, **THE LEGENDARY JOURNEYS** and **XENA, WARRIOR PRINCESS** prepping for permanent exile into syndication, Renaissance Pictures' co-founder Rob Tapert and co-executive producer E. J. Stewart are trading-off spear n' sandal for sex n' sci-fi. **CLEOPATRA 2525** is a hybrid of juggle and CGI, a fatuous **CHARLIE'S ANGELS** for the new millennium. A trio of 26th century babes open phasers on Baffles, morphing machines whose world dominion have prompted mankind to defect underground and develop a fraternity with mutants, robots and hyper-evolved animals.

The pilot episode introduced us to the libertines: Gina Torres—no stranger to sci-fi, she played Dr. Amy Ellis on **M.A.N.T.I.S.** ('94)—plays *Hel*, who's guided through her missions by a voice she bears from a receptor planted in her jaw.



The sci-fi show of **CLEOPATRA 2525**: Victoria Pratt, Gina Torres & Jennifer Lien as all versions of post-Renaissance Pictures' conneries (l-r) **XENA** and **HERCULES**

Vicky Pratt, who performed as "Cyane" on a couple of **XENA** episodes, is cast as the combative Sarge. Jennifer Lien, who played Amara on **XENA**, has been assigned the title character. Cryogenically frozen during a hazardous boob job in 2001, *Cleopatra* is a starlet and exotic dancer who thaws and allies with the

freedom fighters.

Fan boys who dawdle over comic book super-heroines can check out this Desh n' blood incarnation: bombshells attired in battle gear that's likely the Frederick's of Hollywood fantasy of someone working overtime at Sunny Surplus. The threesome simply spelunk through a subterranean se-

ries of shafts to arrive on cue for story exposition. Each girl has their own websbooster, a la Spider-man, that spews translucent webbing for swinging purposes. That's just one of the neat gimmicks that visual special effects supervisor George Port and his crew have packed into each half hour episode. Bots and beasts smoothly appear in the flash of a pixel. Even better, the stories are a match for the comic book medium, applying a verifiest of kintore, Pant-Asa action to an economy of character.

In the pilot, we were introduced to Hel and Sarge, both of whom were resisting a liberal military machine. Wounded in battle, Sarge needs a new kidney so they deliver to a medical bartering facility, offensively by an anthropomorphic snake and lion who have just defeated Cles. As Sarge is patched up, Cleo wakes up just in time for the trinity to be shot at by a T-1000 rip-off, not unlike Woody Allen's Miles Monroe (**SLEEPER**), who slumbered through the 20th century only to awaken into a fascist future—she's recruited via an impromptu initiation rite to bond with rebels. The series



"She looks as if she could really kick some serious butt," opines *Variety*. Cast as Serge in *CLEOPATRA 2000*, Victoria Pratt also portrayed Spidee on a couple of *XENA* episodes ("Adventure in the 5th Trade").



L: Gina Torres, who takes some "Hel" on *GLADIATOR* 2002, played "Dr. Ellis" on *M.A.N.T.I.S.*, a 1994 sci-fi series. R: Jennifer Sky graduated to the *Gladiator* role after a stretch on a soap opera (*GENERAL HOSPITAL*) & appearances on game shows (e.g. *JEOPARDY!*). G: The bombshells (Torres, Sky & Victoria Pratt) as the babs.

is, ostensibly about female anarchists subduing a subversive technology, but the show isn't exactly an Orwellian treat. It's more about the femmes shooting, jumping and sauntering around in cool outfits, although I can't imagine Torres is too comfortable with her breasts crushed against her rib cage. It was a fun preface to the series, which wasted no time getting to the nitty-gritty with plenty of pulchritude and pyrotechnical effects.

In another episode, Hel negotiates the purchase of Cloo, who performed a torrid striptease, in an S&M tavern, to distract mutants from the rescue of human "cattle." Feigning consumption of an aphrodisiac, Hel



heats up and beats the bad-dies with some help from her buds and their acrobatic shooting style. And in a third episode, Sarge's brain is whipped by a beautiful vixen who turns the soldier against Hel. After a padded Eurythmics sequence, which reveals that breakdancing never expired it was only hibernating, Sarge and Hel seriously mess-up the psychic in a badly edited but dandy fight sequence that rounds out the show's final half.

This latter episode is the weakest so far, but it's entertaining thanks to the decorative cast. Torres, Sky and Pratt are veterans of Renaissance commerce. Torres, a New York City native, appeared as Nehalem in

HERCULES: THE LEGENDARY JOURNEYS and as Cleopatra in **XENA: WARRIOR PRINCESS**. Her other credits include *NYPD BLUE*, *LAW AND ORDER*, *SEASIDE STREET*, *LA FEMME NIKITA*, *PROFILER* and *THE GREGORY HINES SHOW*. She cut her teeth on feature films via *THE SUBSTANCE OF FIRE* and *RED OF ROSES*. Attending New York City's High School of Music and Art, the mezzo soprano was engaged for stage work, including *Dreamgirls*, *Anything Goes*, *Face Value* and *The Best Little Whorehouse Goes Public*. To prepare for her Hel role, Torres trained for several weeks in Los Angeles prior to leaving for the series' New Zealand location. Learning basic kung fu, as well as stunt rolling and diving techniques, Torres has been given the opportunity to perform most of her own stunts during the show's 13-14 hour shooting days. Maintenance of her physical shape is ascribed to additional training, "three times a week," and lifting light weights.

Former Canadian track and field champ Victoria Pratt was cast as Sarge after appearing in the Showtime series *JOHN WOO'S ONCE A THIEF* and guest starring as the Queen of the Amazons in the two-part opener of last season's *XENA: The CBSey*, Ontario native has been extremely athletic her entire life, tallying numerous trophies including a medal at the 1990 Canadian Track and Field Championships. She studied anatomy, biomechanics and sociology at York University, earning a degree with honors in kinesiology. Collaborating with one of her former professors on a book about fitness and body building, Pratt consulted Robert Kennedy, publisher of *MuscleMag* and *Oxygen*, for photo illustrations. Impressed with her look, he signed Pratt to a long-term contract as a writer and fitness model. When she revealed that her ultimate

QUOTE "VARIETY"

"Janet Holland's costume design for our femme fatales appears to have been selected by Captain James T. Kirk himself, a man who never could resist a woman with a bare midriff."



Pratt, Sky and Torres meet "Mauzer" (Patrick Kake), a mad-scientist-provisioning robot. One review described the TV series as "a post-apocalyptic pageant party."

goal was acting, Kennedy encouraged her to seriously study the craft. Pratt took the hint: she promptly enrolled at the Actors Network in Toronto.

Pratt was hired as the on-air trainer for *GO FOR IT*, a Discovery Channel series which chronicled caving, rafting and other non-traditional sports. Co-hosting *PERSONAL EDGE*, a fitness show that was broadcast in Canada, Pratt debuted her acting skills in *ONCE A THIEF*. Sliding into another medium, the fledgling actress strut her stuff in fitness videos. Paired with Robert Fletcher, a three-time USA karate champion and North American kickboxing paragon, Pratt got physical in *Karate: The Ultimate Workout*, which offers demonstrations of karate, stretching and conditioning exercises. A blue belt in Shotokan karate, her preferred outlet of exercise is kickboxing. Along with her hectic shooting schedule, Pratt works out six days a week and performs most of her own

stunts in the show.

Born in Palm Beach, Florida, Jennifer Sky launched her show biz career as a 13-year-old model. She crossed-over to TV roles, appearing on episodes of *SEAQUEST*, *DSV*, *PACIFIC BLUE*, *SINS OF THE CITY*, the Disney Channel's *EMERALD COVE*, *BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER* ("The Pack," 4/7/1997) and *OUT OF THE BLUE*. Garnering further apprenticeship, Sky was engaged as a one-season regular on *GENERAL HOSPITAL*, an afternoon soap, and made her movie debut in *TRIGGER HAPPY*. In 1999, Sky played a hot-tempered Amazon in the "Endgame" episode of *XENA: WARRIOR PRINCESS*, and resurfaced on the series in four additional episodes. Her bravura performance as "Amarice" was the catalyst for the Renaissance brass to cast Sky in *CLEOPATRA 2525*. To keep in shape for the role, the vegetarian works out five days a week with light weights as often as her shooting schedule allows.

Supporting the ladies in various episodes is Patrick Kake—formerly Kevin Sorbo's body and stunt double in *HERCULES: THE LEGENDARY JOURNEYS*—plays as Mauzer, a highly intelligent and hunky robot who furnishes his competitors with high-tech weaponry required to lick the baddies. Danielle Cormack, cast in episodes of *HERCULES* and *XENA* as the Amazonian Ephany, portrays Raina, whose aptitude to manipulate the human brain causes trouble for our three heroines. Joel Tobeck—very funny as Strife, the God of Mischief in *HERCULES/JOURNEYS* and *YOUNG HERCULES*—is cast as Cregan, the sinister leader of a mutant gang who fights for control of the underground.

The dichotomy of the series is simple: offer strong women who fight hard and stand their ground as they strip, tease and primp for the satisfaction of a demographically-appealing (adolescent) audience. The stars' ventilated wardrobe paradoxically locks the ladies in a tempestuous but vulnerable mode, something not lost on critics. A *Variety* reviewer noted, "The show hews closely to the formula of skin and mythology that works so well in the genre... Production values are a mixed bag of impressive special effects and seemingly leftover studio sets from the days of the original *STAR TREK*. In fact, Janet Holland's costume design for our femme fatales appears to have been selected by Captain James T. Kirk himself, a man who never could resist a woman with a bare midriff."

Bottom line: the series is as intoxicating as a nip of cognac—briefly euphoric, no unpleasant aftertaste and quickly forgotten. If offered the choice of another *STAR TREK* flick or a sci-fi series juiced on karate and cleavage, I'd yield to my *Cro-Magnon* instincts and growl, "Party on, girls!" □

THE BABES OF BEASTMASTER

THE BELLES OF THE TV SERIES TALK BEASTS, AMAZON WOMEN, MONSTERS, MAGGOTS, COSTUMING, SORCERY AND SEX APPEAL.

By MICHAEL HELMS

Monika Schnarre knows what she wants, and one of those things was to cost as the Sorceress in **BEASTMASTER: THE LEGEND CONTINUES**, a spin-off of the movie franchise. "I wasn't able to audition right away for the TV series," she recounts, "because my grandmother fell ill and I went to Germany. When I got back, I thought it had probably been cast and that I probably wouldn't have a chance of getting the role. I was very interested after reading the initial script and, when I got back to L.A. and heard they hadn't cast it, I immediately auditioned. Two days later, I got it."

Schnarre was primarily attracted to the role because "it was very well written. The Sorceress isn't bad or good, she was just mortal. I thought it was an interesting take on a sorceress because she has no feelings and isn't motivated by anger or hate. She enjoys creating and playing with things and people, without realizing the consequences because she doesn't understand emotion."

The Sorceress's creative venue includes "unicorns and beautiful magical



BEASTMASTER: THE LEGEND CONTINUES, a TV spin-off of the 1982 movie & its 1991 & '95 sequels. *Hotly* Mendon & Monika Schnarre flank Daniel Goddard. "It's color blind casting," explains Mendon. "We all inhabit an ethereal world."

things, but she also messes with the life of Dar (aka the BeastMaster) because she wants to get his power. Much to the dismay of Dar, she sends him on wild goose chases looking for his lost love Kyra. Maybe she's attracted to him... or maybe she just wants his powers? She tells The Ancient One that she doesn't know how Dar communicates with animals, which is one thing she can't do, so she's going to wreck havoc on his life."

Schnarre's waxy witch is something of an apprentice to the Ancient One (Gra-

hamme Bond). Her character's preoccupation with wielding magic exempts Schnarre from the physical obligations experienced by other members of the cast. "I'm mostly casting spells," says the actress. "I'm not running through the jungle like Dar because I can just disappear if I want to. I'm mostly indoors, casting spells and stuff."

As a real-life animal enthusiast, Schnarre is quite comfortable with **BEASTMASTER**'s environment. "That's one of the real reasons I wanted to do the

show," she explains. "To have the opportunity to work with a tiger and a chimpanzee—and dolphins and everything else—is really wonderful. I've been an animal lover all my life, so it's really a dream come true to be able to pet a tiger. It's a once in a lifetime opportunity."

But she has her limits: "I'm not keen on the snakes. I do love animals but I do keep my distance from the rodents and the snakes." Schnarre is also visibly reeling when I describe a close encounter between Daniel Goddard, who plays the series' title role, and maggots: "Ugh, please. Not being a lead, I don't have to do that."

The thespian's own creative contribution to the show includes "the spell casting. I get to choose the gestures. I've been reading up on witchcraft books—in an example, when you cast a spell, which hand do you use? Basically, they let me do what I want and I don't use my Canadian accent. Because this is a 'land before time' milieu, I was allowed to choose whatever I wanted as far as an accent goes; it's not exactly an English accent or a Canadian accent—it's kind of in-between. I didn't want it to be Old English but I did want



Brooke Schreier (Sorceana), a soap diva (BOLD & THE BEAUTIFUL), says her ventilated threads are designed to draw "male viewers at home—adults."

Natalie Mendosa, who plays Kyrina, describes her beauty as "very strong. She's not a weak woman at all. She endures many traumatic & emotional situations."

it to be just different and proper. I think that's something I brought to the role. I thought if I affected a modern American accent it wouldn't work as well because, after all, America didn't exist yet."

Concerning the authenticity of her spells, the actress admits, "They're not exactly in the books that I've been reading. There's nothing in my books about creating a unicorn [laughs]. It's a fantasy show. There are people who believe in witchcraft but their spells are not so ambitious. There are love spells, and we have used some of those and those are pretty accurate someone watching the show, who may consider herself to be a bona fide witch, might not think so but I try to keep it as realistic as possible. I

just didn't want to overdo it, I didn't want to be overacting. I try to keep some sense of realism but, then again, I didn't write the spells—that's outside my control. Above all, it is a fantasy and we certainly have fun with it."

The sorcery is less intimidating to the series' cast than some of the extras. "When you work on the set with animals, there's always a good laugh," grins Schreier. "A tiger, hand raised by humans, would never mean to hurt you. Nevertheless, she gets playful and doesn't know her own size. One time, the tiger playfully swatted Daniel Goddard on the leg and he went down. Everyone was, of course, very concerned but the tiger just wanted to play so she kept

swatting—and Daniel flew about two feet into the air. She's just gorgeous but she doesn't know her own strength."

When I broach discussion of her ventilated trademark costume, Schnarre notes, "I don't know where it originated but it's pretty revealing. I wear flowing, long skirts and low cut corsets. I think that's not so much for the character but for the audience [laughs], hopefully to attract male viewers or female—whatever."

"I think the Sorceana [is sexy]. She doesn't know love or sex, she doesn't remember being human, but I think there's an inherent sensuality about her that she's not aware of. I hope people find her sexy [laughs]."

Natalie Mendosa

While essaying her role of Kyrina, the Beastmaster's belle, Natalie Mendosa has somehow found enough time to launch a parallel career as a pop star. She describes her series character as "basically the princess of the whole story. She's in love with Dar and, from a young age, they always knew that they would marry or be together for the rest of their lives. As Dar's torment—he's punished by other characters in the series—she's always being taken away from him. They might finally come together in an episode, but then something happens and they're torn apart again. This is Dar's torment throughout the whole series—being separated from the love of his life. Personality wise, I'd say

Kyra is very strong. She goes through many, many traumatic experiences of, both, the physical and mental kind. She has to escape out of many dangerous situations, but the fact that she's always taken away from the person she loves is also very emotional.

When queried about Kyra's mythic ethnicity, Mendosa shrugs-off the question: "I don't think that really comes into it at all. All the actors have been cast in a way that it doesn't really matter. It's colorblind casting. The world that they live in is very ethereal in a way. It's never mentioned where she comes from. She comes from the same place, and the same tribe, as Dar and the fact that I, Natalie, have an Asian background in this beautiful, wonderful world, shows those kinds of boundaries don't really exist."

Mendosa laughs heartily when I relate that co-star Goddard pegged her sovereign as something of an Amazonian legend. "He told you that about me?" she says between guffaws. "There in an episode where there are Amazon women, but they're not of any particular look. If you say 'Amazon,' people conjure-up more physical things like strength. Kyra is an Amazon legend but it hasn't anything to do with race; it has more to do with her physical capabilities. She's a very strong woman. She's not your typical princess. She's got this princess quality about her but, at the same time, she's very strong and will fight her way through anything to get to Dar."

Referring to the physical nature of her role, Mendosa notes, "From the beginning, Kyra is always being captured so there's nothing really fun about what she goes through. The only time she's really happy, and finds her bliss, is when she's with Dar because, in every other situation, she's being held captive. There's a scene where I had to fight off an ogre. And that wasn't fun at all, it was

NATALIE MENDOZA

"There was a scene where the wolf had to sniff me to pick up my scent. The crew rubbed my neck with meat. By the 5th take, wolf saliva was running down my body. 'Where's my double?'"



Mendoza (Kyra) and Daniel Goddard (Dar). "Kyra is basically the princess of the whole story," notes Mendoza. "She loves Dar but they're always separated."

really difficult: very scary, very frightening, even when I was acting it. This guy was huge and it was really a horrible scene to act. Through Dar, who is often being taken care of by animals but she can't communicate with them. For example, in one scene, I'm protected by wolves; at first, of course, I'm really frightened of them because wolves can be dangerous predators. But, because Dar has communicated with them, they actually end up guiding me through my escape from where I was being held captive.

"So it was great to work with the animals. That's been a lot of fun. It was very difficult in that animals are unpredictable, but it's also really beautiful to work with the wolves and the others. Really amazing. There's an episode where I was working with the wolves, which was my favorite because they are such playful animals. I worked with different wolves and I love wolves so that was really great to just do that."

Mendoza again concedes that "the role is extremely physical, but I'm a very physical person anyway. I think one of the reasons I was chosen is because I have a long history of arts: I've done dance since I was five, and I've done a lot of martial arts and things like that—so all that has really helped. I'm very focused in anything. I do a lot of different things. I start my day with meditation and yoga, and finish it doing the same thing. I think that is probably where I get my strength from, more than anything, because just having that focus enables me to keep up the training, the physical training, and just to be prepared for when I have to use it when I'm doing BEASTMASTER."

Reviewing the wardrobe fashioned for her character, Mendoza explains, "The materials used are all raw sorts of materials. We've used raw silk for some outfits. When I'm not held in captivity, I'm dressed in a very practical way so I can be physical but there's a char-

acter called King Zed [Steven Grives] who's in love with me—he's the evil character in the show—and, because I'm held captive, I'm dressed the way he wants me to be dressed. So, in situations like that, she's more exotic but it still ties in with the fact that they're living in a time where aquinas don't exist. So when Kyra is being herself, she dresses in very practical attire. She's quite a tough chick and she's always prepared, as Dar is prepared, for any dangerous situations that comes up."

When pressed to cite a behind-the-scenes anecdote, Mendoza promptly recalls, "The unpredictability of the wolves was pretty funny, for example, where they're supposedly running with me but would often head off in the opposite direction. Actually, there was one scene where the wolf had to sniff my neck just to get a scent of me or something. What they did was put some food—some meat—on my neck so the wolf would come and sniff my neck. Well, he just skittered all over me! And he did it so many times, I had this wolf saliva running down my body. Though initially funny, it wasn't that amusing by the time we did the fifth take. I'm like [separated], 'Where's my double?'"

Nevertheless, the former stage actress is very tolerant of the grand required for her recurrent TV role. "It's a lot of fun. For me, I've enjoyed the experience because, more than anything, I've finally become comfortable with cameras. I've done a lot of theatre work more than anything, so it was a great experience learning the different skills that one develops working in front of cameras. And that's really good for me now. I'm doing a lot of film work as well, so having that camera experience has been the most positive thing for me. Just learning different things about the whole TV industry has been really positive." □



Cost as "Garcia," Marika Salmeron is as strong as the genre. Credits include *MAX-LOCK II*, *MAX-WORK II* and an interactive CD game, *Command and Conquer: Tiberian Sun*.

THE SORE LOSERS

HOMICIDAL HILLBILLIES AND ALIENS, MEN IN BLACK, SEX, VIOLENCE & THE WORLD'S END.

By MITCH PERSONS



Punk singer Kerina Elkins. "The film has puzzling elements but they are very retrievable puzzling elements."

"I was taken by the Men in Black and then arrested by the FBI. And an angel kissed me with her blood and then I saw the end of the world."
—D'Lana

The Sore Losers

When we had initially screened Big Broad Guerrilla Monster's production of **THE SORE LOSERS**, we thought, *What the hell!* The blatantly exploitative film—written, produced, and directed by J. Michael McCarthy—spins the story of Blackie (Jack O'Leary), an extraterrestrial who collects comic books. The alien was dispatched to Earth in 1955. His mission: kill 13 bestsellers. But Blackie bumped-off only nine of the social darlings; hence, he makes a comeback to Earth in 2000 to finish the job. Unfortunately, exemplifying reruns of **THE MANY LOVES OF DOBIE GILLIS**, bestsellers are obsolete, but Blackie is undeterred. Abetted by Kerine



Deen Ashurst: "I was in Mike's first film, **DANGEROUS DAUGHTER OF HEAVEN**."

(Kerina Elkins), a vinyl-en-shrouded sadomasochist, he manages to make up the deficit by blowing-away hitchhikers and long hairs. However, a zealous Kerine gets carried away and exceeds the killing quota. In the meantime, carnival strongwoman D'Lana (D'Lana Tunnell)—another one of Blackie's companions—is accused of the couple's crimes and sentenced to be executed in the electric chair. Before D'Lana frays, a naked Kerine invades D'Lana's cell and indulges in a bloody cat-fight with the condemned woman. All ends happily when a bolt of lightning, discharged from Heaven, nukes the entire Earth.

The film is a marriage between **EL TOPO** and **THE INCREDIBLY STRANGE CREATURES** with Ray Dar-

nis Steckler incarnated as Franz Kafka. Blackie runs across a rustic zombie mom (Ghettty Chasun) and an Elvis-like muscman (Mike Maker) who wields a sword cane and—via nostalgic cardboard glasses—X-Ray vision. He also encounters Oriental "Men in Black" (musical group Guitar Wolf) and an anthropomorphic "God" (exploitation guru David Friedman).

To paraphrase Jacqueline Susann, we tended to think once was enough in regard to a screening of **THE SORE LOSERS**. Then again, critics formerly applied the same negative criterion to one of our favorite films, **VERTIGO**—yep, reviewers branded director Alfred Hitchcock's vision, and his downbeat ending (which prompted hissing at some



7: Dawn Ashworth, addressor's of *SORE LOSERS* director J. Michael McCarthy. 8: D'Lana Tarnell performed dual roles ("including a stripper named Topsy Turvy")





screenings), as archaic. But, with repeated viewings, the vilification eventually mutated into a *cause célèbre* for the film's restoration.

It's too early to speculate whether or not **SORE LOSERS** will be enlabeled as director Mike McCarthy's cult icon. But the film improves with each subsequent viewing. What initially appears to be a hodgepodge of disjunctive plot elements and ephemeral character rapport convene into an apocalyptic diorama. The visuals—a walking, chalk-colored corpse, a nude Kerrie painting the interiors of a deserted warehouse with human entrails—are photographed with a Sadian intensity that renders them disturbing but undeniably hypnotic. And, finally, CGI effects aren't trivialized into cheesy grandstanders: McCarthy subtly utilizes the technology like a paintbrush, morphing a young woman into a naked angel and paralleling the future with the past (a space ship turns into a 1955 Chevy).

McCarthy is an affable, articulate filmmaker who loves the limelight. When we spoke with him last October, he was flanked by a coterie of admiring co-workers, including actor/sometimes director Emmy Collins, D'Lana Tunnell and Dawn Ashcroft; the latter—McCarthy's wife—is often visible in her spouse's movies.

"I was conceived in Tupelo, Tennessee," says McCarthy, "but then I was given away for adoption. I grew up as a pretty lonely kid. What saved me was the fact that I fell in love with the land there, and particularly the 100 mile stretch between Tupelo and Memphis. I got to thinking about that area as being almost holy. After all, I was treading on the very same ground as another Tennessee native, Elvis Presley.

"I was never a huge Elvis fan but there was something about the metaphysical part

SORE LOSERS.
Dawn Ashcroft &
Kerrie Edries
pledge friendship.
"This is such a
strong project that
its very existence
could bring back
the lost art of the
exploitation film,"
explains Edries.

of the man—the legend, or whatever—that grabbed ahold of me and wouldn't let go. It may even have been the spirit of Jesse, Elvis' twin brother, that was causing the obsession. Jesse was stillborn, he never had a chance to find out if he would become the legend that Elvis was. I came from a beginning much like Jesse's—empty, dark and cold—except that I lived and had a chance to find my place in life.

"As this lonely kid, I read a lot, especially comic books, they gave me a good taste of pop culture. Eventually, I became a cartoonist and had some limited success. I took the notions that I put into my comics, plus a hefty dosage of my personal life, and dumped them into my films."

"Interestingly enough," chimes in Emmy Collins, "it was as a cartoonist, and not as a filmmaker, that I initially met Mike. I was doing stand-in work in Los Angeles for *THE PEOPLE VS. LARRY FLYNT*. I had looked over in the corner, and saw this guy doodling."

"My wife Dawn was in that movie," relates McCarthy, "and I was killing time by doing some storyboards. I saw this dude with long hair watching me and I thought, 'What's that hippie staring at?'"

"At the same time," continues Collins, "I was thinking, 'Who's that weird, dweeb cartoonist?' But we started talking, and found out that we were both interested in directing. I was doing a short film called *JACK THE DIPPER*, and Mike told me about this exploitation movie that he wanted to make in Memphis."

"The movie was going to be called *HOODLUM A.D.*," says McCarthy. "A few months after our first meeting, I played a small part in *JACK THE DIPPER*. Later on, Emmy returned the favor by becoming my associate producer on *HOODLUM A.D.*, which eventually turned into *THE SORE*

"My folks disowned me because I took my top off in Mike's movie. But when I was in LARRY FLYNT, they boasted, 'Our daughter plays a hooker in a Hollywood film.'"



T: Director J. Michael McCarthy w/ Karine Elkins, Dawn Ashcraft, Susan Shopard, R: McCarthy and Emmy Collins set-up a shot. Collins served as associate producer on *HOODLUM A.D.*, later titled *THE SORE LOSERS*. R: D Lane Turner



LOSERS."

"Mike likes using the people he knows in his films," says Ashcraft. "I was in his very first picture, *DAMSELVIS, DAUGHTER OF HELVIS*, and also had a part in his second film—it was a really good flick called *TEENAGE TUPELO*. And, like Emmy here, I was an associate producer for *THE SORE LOSERS*."

"*DAMSELVIS*," resumes McCarthy, "is the story of this girl, Damselvis, played by Sherry Lynn Gerris, who is a loner, archetype heroine. She's a chick on a hike dressed in Vegas white vinyl, who rides around and tries to spread the message of the then-coming millennium and the worship of Elvis. She has four incarnations: RebElvis, which is the fifties; PsychElvis, which is the sixties; ElVicious, which is the seventies, and finally Damselvis, who is the Dionysian goddess made from



the parts of the other three incarnations. *DAMSELVIS* runs 62 minutes. It was shot on Super VHS, and cost a whopping \$2,000 to make.

"The next film we did, *TEENAGE TUPELO*, was a more ambitious project. Although it was in black-and-white, it was filmed on Super-8 and ran 83 minutes. The budget was higher, too, around \$12,000. *TUPELO*

FANNY HILL, TRADER HORNER, etc.). Now, I'm a bit more conservative than he was in regard to what I put on the screen. I'm more into the idea of titillation—no pun intended there—or just a hint of sex and violence. I'm quite restrained compared to Dave and especially his most famous film, **THE BLOOD FEAST**.

"But I also know what sells. Let's face it, in films like **THE SORE LOSERS** it's a great deal of fun watching women who are naked. But it's not only the erotic value that's so attractive. If you notice, the women in **THE SORE LOSERS** have it totally over the men: they are the ones who are calling the shots by having the ability to say 'Yes' or 'No.' By capitalizing on that ability, the women are creating a certain amount of suspense.

"That sort of suspense is something which is totally missing from the so-called exploitation films that are glutting the market these days. Most exploitation movies are really quite bad and boring...and tedious to watch. You can go get a drink, you can go to the bathroom while they're on—you can live out your life while you're watching these movies. It's basically going in the same time continuum. You come back to the couch, with your chips and beer, and the same scene is on the TV set."

"I defy anybody to have



It's Late Turner ("The women in **SORE LOSERS** have it totally over the men, they're the ones calling the shots," says the director) J. L. Kerne Elkins, Dawn Ashford and Susan Shaper. "We're at it this very intimate film," says Elkins

that experience watching **THE SORE LOSERS**," reaffirms Collins. "If you turn away, you're going to miss a really neat element—like the naked angel with the wings, or the invasion of the Men in Black.

"That's the thing that keeps Big Broad Guerrilla Monster, Mike's production company, going. It's the suspense elements, and the

twists in plots, that make his films so appealing. John Waters practically made a shrine out of Baltimore because his early films, including **PINK FLAMINGOS**, were shot in that city. I think Mike's going to be doing the same thing with Memphis."

"There were two good reasons why I shot the bulk of **THE SORE LOSERS** in

Memphis," McCarthy admits. "First, my adopted dad owns 25 acres of property there, and he allowed us to shoot all of the 17 locations we needed without us having to pay a cent; second, in making the film, I could be as outlandish as I wanted to be. In that part of the country, it's more or less expected. We could get away with just about anything: cat-fights in the dirt, blood being splattered...all that stuff. Even the cops helped us. I have a theory that if you play to the voyeur in any man with authority, he'll do anything you want; just tell him all the nudity, all the stunts—they're not for real."

"They accepted everything we did," says Tunnell. "There was one scene, though, that must have had them scratching their heads and wondering, 'Just what the heck is going on here?'"

"D'Lana's probably talk-

"CADAVERA, about a starlet made from the parts of dead movie stars, will be a 'romantification' of decadence...a CITIZEN KANE of monster movies!"



TAR Supporting *SORE LOSERS* starlet D'Lana, B. J. Michael McCarthy, Emmy Collins and Darin Ippolito on the set of *JACK THE COPPER*. "That one was a short film that I was doing when I was introduced to Mike," recalls Collins.



ing about the scene where she appears to actually lift a motorcycle over her head," Ashcraft points out. "Am I right?"

"That's the one," grins Tunnell. "But the onlookers never saw my motorcycle. If they had taken a look at the camera filming the scene, they would have known what was happening. I had a Harley that I rode every-

where. Mike had the idea of having my character use the motorcycle in her stage act. We had a terrific special effects guy, Joe Riley. He created a scale model of my bike, down to the little details on the toolbox. Joe held the model on strings a few inches in front of the camera. I stood farther back, about 40 feet, and pretended to do something with an object that wasn't there."

"That effect was shot with a 5mm lens," explains Collins, "so everything—the bike, D'Lana, the background—was in focus. We set up a monitor so that D'Lana could see everything she did. When the camera panned down, she could see her face through the motorcycle as she lifted it. She just kept squatting down, further and further, until she was almost sideways. She had her legs at an angle, but kept her face level with the bike."

"I got all the way down to the lookland on that one," laughs Tunnell. "That's the way it was done and it turned out great!"

"Everything in that film came out much better than I expected it would," shrugs a beaming McCarthy. "And that's because, like John Waters, I've learned more as a director from project to project. You might even go so far as to say that DAMSELVIS and TEENAGE TUPELO were my MONDO TRASHOS, and that *THE SORE LOSERS* was my *PINK FLAMINGOS*."

"That reference to John Waters isn't just an accident," notes Ashcraft. "We just showed *THE SORE LOSERS* at The John Waters Chicago Underground Film Festival."

"You have to go to these festivals," insists McCarthy. "It's my intention to influence pop culture for the next ten years. I want to make money, and I want to be able to put that money into my films. It doesn't even have to be a lot of money. I can make ten movies on the money that most people invest in one movie. Without selling out, I





can use all the aesthetics that I applied to what I've already done. The festivals are a road to that because that's how you meet distributors. The Waters festival was one of two we went to. We also went to The Central Florida Film and Video Festival, where we won first prize. As a result, we have a tentative deal going right now that involves some very influential distributors. That's not half bad for a film-to-video like ours.

"If we get the distribution we want for *THE SORE LOSERS*, I'll go ahead with my next project, a film called *CADAVERA*, about a starlet made from the parts of dead movie stars. She's made from Eva Braun, Jayne Mansfield, Marilyn Monroe and Sharon Tate. There's a poor punk rock girl, played by D'Lana, who doesn't have an identity of her own. So she gets her head put on all these body parts.

"*CADAVERA* is going to

be a 'romantification' of decadence, almost a *CITIZEN KANE* of monster movies. It's basically an old-fashioned, feel-good, rubber-suit monster movie with a little bit of computer graphics thrown in. We plan to make *CADAVERA* something of a tribute to the starlets who appeared in all those '30s and '40s monster movies' actresses like Anne Gwynne and Evelyn Ankers, because *Cadavera* is herself a monster starlet. Literally.

"This is a fun project, with lots of tits and ass and some horror elements thrown in, but nothing really heavy. It's something like a glow-in-the-dark Aurora Model Hobby Kit. That would be an ideal shrine to the whole movie. If I could have Aurora Model hobby kits come back, and base their superstructure on all the characters that appear in *CADAVERA*, I will be a very happy man."

Ti Kerrie Blake, Dawn Ashcraft and Susan Shepard confirm that the script of *THE SORE LOSERS* was not written with teenage in-check. *B. D'Lana Turner*.







MONIQUE PARENT

SHE NUKED THE '90S WITH HER HOT DIRECT-TO-VIDEO COMMERCE: THE EROTIC THRILLER DIVA CANDIDLY CHRONICLES THE UPS AND DOWNS OF HER CAREER.



BY MARC SHAPIRO

The erotic thriller diva has no problem with love scenes. Just don't ask her to talk too much about them.

"I don't know how many love scenes I've done in my career," sighs Monique Parent, who has smoldered in more than 50 movies and a cable-TV series. "I don't want to think about it. It's like you start thinking about the number of people you've kissed, and the fact that most of them you didn't want to kiss. I just don't want to think about it."

But the doe-eyed Parent—who has a trace of an accent—laughs when reminded her past experience would likely qualify the actress as a surrogate director: "These days, people are a little more willing to listen to what I have to say. There have been films where the directors have turned to me and said, 'You've shot more love scenes than I have—you do it. Just tell me what you want to do and where I should place the camera.'"

Parent trivializes her physical lustier as a catalyst for her ascent into sex sovereignty. "My body isn't that

"We drew upon Monique's dance background for the left photo," notes photographer Josh Davis. "It's a sort of Bob Fosse take on Liz Taylor." **St. Parent** as "Brenner" in **DEAN GUNDEL**.



great. In fact, I think I have a pretty average body. It's not like I'm Julie Strain or anybody like that. I think part of the reason I'm successful is that I fit right on the line where both men and women find me attractive. I think I would be intimidating to women if I had bigger boobs, a smaller waist and longer legs."

Circumventing any pretense of a stereotype, Parent pulses with an innate intelligence. Far from burned out, Parent—after nearly a decade of playing tempestuous coquettes—can still effortlessly hybridize sex appeal and sophistication. But she acknowledges a career reformation is in development: the actress in a self-imposed state of unemployment, opting to temporarily withdraw from the B-movie grind in an attempt to swim mainstream.

"I'm starting all over again," relates Parent, admitting her direct-to-video purview was "based upon my decision. I did too many of those movies but it was my choice to do too many of them. I was greedy. I wanted the money and the ego boost. I liked the idea of working all the time. Now I'm at the point where I don't want to work on them. That's my choice, too. Some days I get depressed because I'm not out there as much as I used to. If I wanted to be working every day, I could pick up the phone and he doing that. But I don't want to work on the kinds of things I used to do. I want to work on the things that give me a personal sense of satisfaction."

Monique Parent was born in San Luis Obispo, California. With the exception of a short stint in Arizona during her adolescence, she spent her formative years in The Golden State. "It was a normal family life," recalls the actress. "We were total middle class right down to the 2.5 kids."

By the time she turned three, Parent trained in ballet. But her allegiance switched to acting when she

MONIQUE PARENT

"Part of the reason I'm successful is I fit right on the line where men & women find me attractive. I'd be more intimidating to women if I had bigger boobs, a smaller waist & longer legs."



"I shot 2 films, *SUNSET AFTER DARK* (5) and *PERFECT GIFT*, simultaneously. I'd shoot one film for 12 hours, then go to another set and shoot for 12 hours."

was cast in community theater productions. The fledgling thespian, at age nine, graduated to a plum role in *Middler on the Roof*. "It was sort of what I grew up doing and, as I got older, it just seemed logical that acting was what I would do. But, when I matured into my late teens, I knew acting was not what one considered a practical career choice." Parent enrolled in college but eventually postponed her education to open a clothing store.

"But I really sucked as a business person, and so the clothing store failed miserably," laughs Monique. "So I decided, 'You know what? I'm in my twenties, I want to go to Los Angeles and I want to act. If I'm ever going to do it, I'd better do it now.' I didn't want to be one of those bitter old women who looks back on her life and says, 'I could have been.' If I couldn't do it, then fine. But I had to find out."

Arriving in L.A. during the summer of 1990, Parent initially scouted auditions, preferring to study for one year at the Beverly Hills

Playhouse while waitressing ("...and doing all the ridiculous things actors have to do to put food on the table."). She also fell, like a ton of bricks, for a guy named Harry.

Parent hooked up with a personal manager, who cautioned his young charge to "Avoid nudity, it's going to hurt your career." Only a couple of cattle calls later, she reached a crossroads. "There was this one thing that came up where there was some nudity required. But it was a SAG film and so my manager said, 'Do it this one time so you can get your SAG card.' I never really had a hang-up about nudity. I was always the kind of person who would go to a nude beach. For me, nudity was just a very natural thing."

Cast in a minor role, Parent made her film debut in *SECRET GAMES* (1992). "I didn't really have a clue about what was going on. I only had one scene. I knock on the door, this other girl says, 'Come in' and I walk in. All I could think of was,

"Do they really say 'Action?' I knew I had to hit something called marks because I had read something about that in *TV Guide*."

The production of *SECRET GAMES* concurrently meshed with a critical phase in Parent's personal life. She furnished Harry with the key to her apartment. "I told him that I was just doing this one scene. I had to be there at five and I would be finished by eight. But, pretty soon, it was nine and ten and eleven and twelve. I'm calling Harry and telling him I'll be home soon. Well I didn't get home until eight the next morning. He was like, 'Who is this woman I'm getting involved with?' To him, I was suddenly this total flake. But we worked our way through it."

Parent gauges her subsequent assignment, *BUFFORD'S BEACH BUNNIES* (1993), as her "first real film." She spent three weeks running around in a pair of hot pink bunny ears and variable stages of undress. Subsequently hired as little more than a bit player in *SINS OF DESIRE* (1993), Parent recalls, "It was one of those things where I got a call and they asked if I could come out and help them with something."

Parent is a blast in MAXIMUM SECURITY: the action film reunited her with *Silence of the Lambs* Michelle Yoo



Originally slated for the lead in *SEX AND THE SINGLE ALIEN* (1980), Parent opted for another picture after producers altered the scheduled shoot. Upon wrapping the preferred movie, she had been told that an alternate, diminutive role was still available in *SINGLE ALIEN*: it was something about a babe whose orgasm impersonation made Meg Ryan's *WHEN HARRY MET SALLY* routine sound like a Sunday school sermon.

"I don't think I was asked to do anything really kinky in those first four films," recounts Parent. "The love scenes I was doing were all



pretty straightforward. I mean, after those bunny ears and the orgasm, what's strange?"

NIGHT EYES 3 (1983) proved a mixed blessing. Her two-day stint as a bimbo, cavorting in and out of a night club sequence, introduced her to a friendship with the film's star, Shannyn Sossamon. But her portrayal of a dumb blonde, complete with giggles and cutesy pie infections, was so effectively charismatic it proved anathema to any further development of the character. "At one point in that film, I felt so bad that I felt like turning around and telling the director, 'You know I can act!'"

Nevertheless, Parent was content with her first five movies; sure, the salary was

MONIQUE PARENT

"With so many of these low-budget tits & ass things, they don't care if you get real emotion into things. I did too many of those films. I was greedy, I wanted the money & the ego boost."



In *DARK SECRETS*, a film looked in a S&M vein: "There's a fantastic scene with Parent & Julia Stiles," notes one critic. "Pull down the shades; this one's gone get ya." L: Parent in *VIOLENT KISS*, co-starring w/ Margaux Hemingway.

poverty row (approx. \$400 a role) but, emotionally, she was on top of the world. "I was totally, absolutely satisfied. I was still learning the ropes and I thought that this level of filmmaking was the best place to make my mistakes."

THE MAKING OF...AND GOD SPOKE (1993), in which Parent played a "Nude Ninja," was "another of those half-day, throw-away bimbo parts. I know a lot of actresses who have problems with those bimbo roles because they're afraid the public is going to think they're actually bimbos. Because I'm not a bimbo, I can go all the way with those kinds of roles and still feel good about myself."

When I allude to her role as a nude dancer in *DRAG-*

broadcast of only a single episode. "What can I say?," she shrugs. "I did an episode and it never aired."

At this point in her career, Parent analyzed her past roles and was decidedly ambivalent about her status in the cottage industry. The actress was encouraged by her gig in *DIVORCE LAW*, which she performed with clothes intact; on the other hand, her celebrity in *8-out-of-10*, direct-to-video commerce was incrementally expanding as a result of her professional attitude in an often less than professional environment.

"You can build a career on being easy to work with," she offers with no small sense of pride. "I try to be easy to work with. Sometimes I can give in on something because it doesn't mean anything, and it'll make the rest of the day, and the rest of the shoot, a little easier to get through."

In fact, she's developed a tolerance for oversights, or insensitivity, that would provoke another actress to call a lawyer. Sample her billing—or lack of it—in *SEXUAL OUTLAWS* (1994): "I went to Blockbuster, rented the movie, popped it in the VCR and I said, 'Okay my name isn't in the first part of the credits—and in the last part, it was like I'm not there. I never found out why and I didn't pursue it. What's the point? If it was intentional, and that made them feel better, okay. If it was unintentional, what's done is done. They're not going to recall all these cassette past to put my name in there."

Upon completion of *PLAY TIME*—another generic pot-boiler that eludes her retention—Parents admitted to herself, "I was being mercenary. At that point, I was getting greedy. The money was getting a little better and so I wanted to work as much as I could. I was shooting two films [*PERFECT GIFT*, '94 and *SUNSET AFTER DARK*, '96] simultaneously. They both wanted me. So I managed to

ON FIRE (1993), Parent reacts with a throaty laugh: "I have no recollection of that movie at all. I have no idea what that is. It must have been that weekend that I just can't remember."

But she definitely retains total recall of *DIVORCE LAW* (1993), a low-budget T&A affair in which Parent—cast as a lawyer—"had absolute tongue twisters of 12 impossible things to say." She was promptly engaged for "a little one day part" in *BODY OF INFLUENCE* ('98). Once again, Parent's acting aptitude took a back seat to the visibility of her anatomy as sets.

During the same year, she landed her first mainstream gig in *SOUTH OF SUNSET*, a TV series about cops that tanked after the

arrange my schedule so I could be on one film one day, and the other the next.

"I've worked many times on things where I shot a 12 hour day, got dressed, jumped in my car, drove to the next set and shot for 12 hours. Then I'd go to another set and shoot for another 12 hours. It's not easy and it's definitely not fun but, earlier in my career, I felt I could go 36 hours straight if I needed to. I went through a lot of Vicins and coffee."

Her recollection of **DANGEROUS TOUCH** ('94) is that first time director Lou Diamond Phillips "was very wonderful and very sweet." **WHITE CARGO** ('95) reunited Parent with Shannon Tweed but an event in her personal life proved more memorable: the actress and Harry, her longtime beau, got engaged. "He's been totally supportive of what I do," she smiles. "He really stays out of it. He feels that my decisions are my decisions, and that it is not his place to tell me not to do something. He knew going into the relationship what it was going to be like. He's been on sets when I've shot love scenes. He's seen how boring it is. When I shot a love scene with Julie Strain [in **DARK SECRETS**], he asked if he could come to the set. I said, 'Okay' and he got all excited. He watched us do one take and said, 'Okay I want to go home now.'"

As she prepared for her next roles, something came between the guests lists and choice of bridesmaids' dresses and Parent just couldn't resist. "I got the call to audition for **VICIOUS KISS** ('95). I went to the audition but my brain wasn't totally there. I was getting married the next day, so I was a little distracted—especially since the same day I did that audition, I did a quick part on **ALIEN ESCAPE** ('95). That was a fa-



Parent probes into **DARK SECRETS**: Shades of William Castle! The film's kinky sex theme prompted producers to drop a limited volume of video boxes in black leather!

vor job, just a few hours, a no brainer. I got killed very quickly in it."

Following her honeymoon, Parent flew to the Atlanta location of **VICIOUS KISS**. "That was a difficult shoot in a lot of ways. The producer and director were not as professional as one might hope for." Her next movie, **SCORING** ('95), proved a pleasant surprise.

Sure, there was the usual quota of obligatory nudity but her role as Marshla, a junkie on the skids, gave her the chance to play a character more complex than post-war-time bimbo confections.

"Sometimes, I feel more like I'm just posing rather than acting," quips the actress regarding the majority of her screen credits. "With

so many of these low-budget tits and ass things, the filmmakers don't really care if you get real emotion into things. They just want you to try and look pretty. When I cry, I look like shit. My whole face just goes to hell."

REVENGE OF THE CALENDAR GIRLS ('95), a machismo fantasy about pinups literally coming to life, turned into Parent's personal hell. "The director was pure scam!" she winces. "He was very unprofessional in asking the girls to do certain things. When there's a love scene going on, you don't pull the guy aside and tell him to really go down on the girl. He was doing alot of stuff like that. When we were doing nude scenes, he would have somebody on the side shooting with his own personal video camera. Finally, I couldn't stand it any longer and I just went off on him. I figured this was his first movie, and I had been around for a while, and so I felt I had nothing to lose. After I told him off, the other girls gave me a round of applause."

The B-movie milieu continued to be a bumpy ride for Parent. In **MARRIED PEOPLE, SINGLE SEX II: FOR BETTER OR WORSE** ('96), she was put through a melancholic ringer as the hattered Valerie. "Initially, I didn't want to play Valerie because all she was going to be doing was crying in every scene. But the director insisted that it would be good for me. Emotionally it was a difficult film. I'm not the

type of actress who can cry at the drop of a hat. I have to torture myself. I had to sit around, before each scene, and think of every depressing thought I could to start crying. And the tough part was that I couldn't leave it all on the set. I would leave, go home, take a shower and then spend hours crying it out to the finish."

The good news about *BLONDE HEAVEN* (1995), a vampire vehicle originally tailored for Brigitte Nielsen, was that Parent interacted with genre vets Michelle Bauer and Julie Strain. The bad news: "I was sick as a dog with flu. All I can really remember was sleeping until they'd wake me up and bring me to the set. They'd have a vomit bucket on the set just in case. I was so sick I was literally changing color from take to take."

She was all too aware that the "pay would be terrible" for *TENDER FLESH*, a quickie shot in Spain. "But I said I would do it if they flew my husband over as well, so that we could work it in as a vacation." Nevertheless, Parent returned home from the shoot under a cloud of disillusionment. "This was about the time when I felt I really needed to be acting and not just posing. What I was doing was not what I had gotten into acting for. It had reached the point where money didn't matter anymore. I decided I would rather be broke than take certain jobs. So I just started saying no to certain things."

Parent shifted to another medium, appearing in cable-

Jeff Reicher and Parent (as "Miss Heartbreak") in *LOVE STREET* in *I DREAMED OF ANGELS CRYING*.



MONIQUE PARENT

"BLOODTHIRSTY was a low budget movie like all the others, and it's got problems like all the others. But every single person on that show gave a shit. And that is how I want to work."



The *BLOODTHIRSTY* Parent is impressed with the filmmaker's sincerity. "We are not always going to make the best thing there is, but at least we can try."

TV series (e.g. *HOTLINE*, *EROTIC CONFESSIONS*, etc.): she was eventually cast as Madame Veronica, a recurrent role on *BEVERLY HILLS BORDELLO*. The actress finally surfaced on prime time in the *Rodeo* episode (1/6/95) of *WALKER, TEXAS RANGER*. "After all the years of making what I thought was decent money, I suddenly felt like I was being overpaid on that show," she chuckles. "It was like, 'Do you know how much I'm getting paid per word?'"

But Parent, reprising her customary drill, signed-up for another string of direct-to-video movies (e.g. *STRIP-SHOW*). More challenging was her casting in *Phantomagoria: A Puzzle of the Flesh*, a CD game: as a result of its adult content (nudity/violence/profanity), the interactive adventure—Grand Guignol for the home computer—was branded "not appropriate for players under 17." A disclaimer ("WARNING: Intense Content") was attached to box covers. "That was a weird

thing to shoot," she grins. "Usually, I'm given a script and it's 80 pages long. This thing was so voluminous as *War And Peace*. Each scene played out in a number of different ways, and we had to shoot all of them. All I could think of was, 'Who is this character?' and how I would react to all of these different options. It was really difficult but I was the only person in that thing who didn't get turned into an alien—I was the only one who survived."

As a fire-off titles of her remaining '96 releases, Parent offers only abridged descriptions or a fragmentary anecdote: *MASSEUSE* ("...a Fred Olsen Ray T&A romp"), *LOVE ME TWICE* ("All I can remember is changing my clothes quite a lot"), and *LEBENSBOHN* ("I played a nice little Stepford wife in a movie that was offensive to everybody"). But then there was *LADYKILLER*, the film that unnerved the unflappable Harry.

"My husband really got upset with me. It had been so long since I had done that

film that I had forgotten that my character gets her throat cut in it. By the time I remembered, we had rented it and were watching it and—all of a sudden—there I am suffering this really horrible death. Harry can watch me do a love scene. But he doesn't really like to watch me get killed."

DARK SECRETS ('96) once again matched Parent with Julie Strain, this time for a sapphic bonding scene that's exquisitely photographed in a torrent of rain (the film's S&M ambience prompted a promotional gimmick: a limited number of video cassettes were wrapped in black leather). *BUSTED*, a comic trifle directed by Corey Feldman, reacquainted Parent and Strain. The wasted cast also included Playboy Playmates Devin DeVasquez and Ava Fabian. *MAXIMUM REVENGE* (1997), which fused a body count with the T&A quota, once again allied the actress with Michelle Bauer. But the roles were constrained to just another crack at "stripping and posing." Consequently, Parent's frustrations made a comeback.

"I was working so hard and I was getting a lot of work. But I did not have the satisfaction of getting the kind of work I aspired to. I felt like I was still waiting to get where I wanted to advance—and that I was not anywhere close to that goal."

Parent waded through *HEARTLESS AND LOVERS*, *LIARS & THIEVES* (both released in '97), a couple more nondescript films that reinforced her already jaundiced attitude. "I again started to say 'No' to a lot of stuff," she reflects. "I've decided I'm not going to work on stuff that nobody gives a shit about."

But the defection proved short-lived. She drew a bit closer to the mainstream with *JAMES DEAN: RACE WITH DESTINY* ('97). Parent played actress Ursula Andrews opposite Casper Van Dien in the title role.

Her subsequent gig in L.A. **CONFIDENTIAL**—as a “glorified extra” who had been surgically altered into a Grace Kelly clone—ended up on the cutting room floor. Parent slipped back into her familiar terrain...

TURNAROUND (1998), shot in Costa Rica and edited in Hong Kong, offered only one surprising twist: during post-production, a U.K. actress was hired to loop all of Parent’s dialogue. “You see my face, then I open my mouth and there’s this weird, semi-British voice coming out of it. I was not happy with that.” Parent was equally unenthusiastic with her participation in the same year’s **SWEETHEART MURDERS**. “I didn’t want to make that movie, but it was my manager who was making it. It’s not a great movie and he didn’t want to make it great. He wasn’t interested in making a great movie, which I don’t understand. Why would you want to put your clients in a bad movie? He was just trying to make something to make some money.”

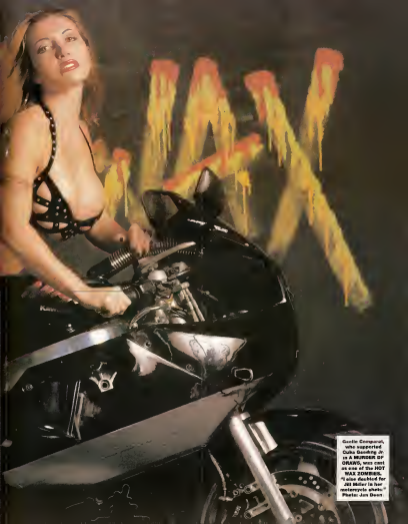
Parent’s choice for her best movie of 1998—compe-

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“When Marique [9] talked about her suits, I saw a little girl quality in her,” says Jan Dean. “If Parent is one of the AMERICAN SWEETHEARTS







Gentle Corporal,
who supported
Cuba Gooding Jr.
in **A MURDER OF MINDS**, was cast
as one of the **HOT
MAX ZOMBIES**.
He also dressed for
Jeri Miller in her
motorcycle photo.
Photo: Jon Dean



"Wendy St. John plays very much a modern woman," says co-producer Bill Bux. "She's fun-loving, free-loving and knows exactly who she is. When the chemical gets into her pores, it accentuates what is already there."

HOT WAX ZOMBIES ON WHEELS

TIRED OF PLAYING THE WAITING GAME, A COUPLE OF OUTSIDERS PRODUCE A HORROR-COMEDY ABOUT SEX, VANITY AND ZOMBIES.

BY MITCH PERSONS

It is an uncharacteristically chilly day in Los Angeles—a brisk 40 degrees Fahrenheit. Evidently, no one communicated this weather report to Mike Roush, producer/director of Wax Rhapsodie's **HOT WAX ZOMBIES ON WHEELS**.

Tall as a maypole, he saunters into a restaurant wearing a T-shirt and shorts. Bill Blum, Roush's co-producer, is more conservatively dressed in a long-sleeved shirt and slacks. As both gentlemen slide into a booth, Blum notes that "Shorts are Mike's trademark. I don't think I would recognize him if he were wearing anything else."

Roush laughs, "It's not because I'm trying to make a statement or anything, although I do have something of a reputation for being a nonconformist. An example of my—shall we say, polite rebelliousness—is how I got involved in making **HOT WAX ZOMBIES ON WHEELS**. My background is in theater production, with some work in short subjects and commercials. I had always wanted to do film though, and Bill—who also has a production background—had been a good friend of mine for years. I said to him one day, 'Let's chuck all this other stuff and



Top: Gwen Ganss and her costars. "Gwen [y] proved irresistible," says director Mike Roush. The starlet recalled "someone to ride on an evil-looking Harley."

make a movie!"

"Yes, that's true," concedes Blum. "When I was at Embassy Pictures, I knew this writer, Elizabeth Bergholz, who had knocked off a script called **HOT WAX ZOMBIES ON WHEELS**. It had been sitting around for a while without ever being produced. I gave the script to Mike, and it really, really impressed him. He and I optioned it, then tried to get some of the major studios involved in making it."

"But we got tired of playing the waiting game," continues Roush, "so we decided to go ahead and do the film ourselves. We called on just about every favor that we could possibly

have called on over the last 15 or 20 years, and put the whole thing together.

"**HOT WAX ZOMBIES** is the story of a motorcycle band, led by an evil supervillain named Yvonne Wayne, that zooms into a sleepy



Oregon fishing village ostensibly to set up a depilatory waxing parlor. What the unsuspecting townsfolk do not know is that Yvonne and her brood are zombies, and the wax that Yvonne applies to the citizens' bodies has a secret chemical that seeps into their psyches and transforms them into hairless, sex-crazed chopper-mobile automata. Every barber, nurse, fisherman and gas station attendant soon falls under Yvonne's control. It is her plan to turn the whole world into mindless slaves, and thus take over the planet. She almost succeeds but is foiled by the actions of Sharon, the owner of a lingerie shop."



Catherine Disher, Forrest B. Wood and Gwen Somers, which will survive the HOT WAX ZOMBIES? "It's a funny movie," says director Mike Roush. "But, in the original script, the story took a dark turn on page 58."

"As you can probably tell by the title and the plot," Blum says, "this is not the most serious of films. It's a light-hearted spoof on the whole horror genre."

"However," interjects Roush, "you really can't go quite so far by saying HOT WAX ZOMBIES is a spoof. I mean, there are spoofs like THE NAKED GUN and HIGH ANXIETY which are classics of humor, but they subsist on rim shot humor. That's the kind of humor that doesn't really make you laugh on your own, but tells you when to laugh. A man will be talking very seriously for about five minutes then the camera pulls back and reveals that the man isn't wearing any pants. With HOT WAX ZOMBIES, we've created our own universe—it's what Bill and I think is funny—as opposed to this rim shot comedy."

"Our humor derives mostly from the tenor of our times," Blum continues. "The very idea of hot waxing is, in our film, a sardonic comment on far-out fads in our country. Yvonne, the chief zombie, has a speech where she says she is going to get all the governments in the world in tow by making sex slaves out of them. Talk about timely. I mean, we already have a sex-crazed president. It wouldn't be too hard to win him over to Yvonne's cause."

"Even the scenes that involve semi-nudity and sex have a timely humor about them. The first time we really see the effect of the chemical in the hot wax is when screen Kimberly St. John, who is playing Sharon's assistant, and Yvonne's right-hand man—a huge, bulky actor named N. A. Stewart—get together for a little swing time. Steven

art plays a man who is a super-duper stud but, after Kimberly's character has been hot-waxed, he can't handle her! Of course, the situation here is that this woman is very much a modern woman in that she knows exactly who she is before she gets waxed. She has no inhibitions at all. When the chemical gets into her pores, it just exacerbates what is already there."

"It is a funny movie," smiles Roush, "but the way Elizabeth originally wrote it, the first 50 pages of the script were really wonderful, but then the story took this dark turn, where people were actually dying from this wax. I'll never forget, it was on page 56, where the first mention of blood and death came in. I went to Elizabeth and said, 'You know, you've got something that's

The WAX Massage director Mike Roush with Tru Lowell, Forrest Wood and Jan Briddle. "Audiences may see some revolting stuff to slaves, black & white horror films."



THE CO-PRODUCER

"Zombies vow to make sex slaves of governments & we already have a sex-crazed president."

really interesting and original and unique. Let's play this out. Let's have the lead character find a way to get people brought back to their original human form. Let's not kill anybody. We don't have to do that.' So that's what we did. Sharon finds this particular element in the fern on Pacific yew trees, and she discovers that the shavings have these chemical effects that can reverse the zombie process, hence, she and a few of the remaining townspeople, who haven't become zombies, run around with these shavings, trying to sprinkle them on people to try to get them to revert back to normal."

"The selection of a proper antidote for the zombie wax posed a little bit of a problem. We wanted something native to the Pacific Northwest, but we also wanted something fairly exotic. We had considered spotted owl pellets but, because of budget, time and location restrictions, we decided to stay with a natural element native to both Oregon and Southern California. We did that because the film was actually shot in and around Los Angeles."

"We were on an extremely tight budget, with a 12-day shooting schedule. Things could have been a nightmare but, fortunately, we were working with a highly cooperative cast and crew. At the outset, as with all productions, we all thought we knew what our jobs were going to be but, once filming started, matters arose and everybody had to do more—and no one ever complained. Jill Miller, who played Sharon, was on the set acting 12 hours a day over a period of two weeks, and her energy never flagged. In fact, she got more energetic as time went on. Elizabeth Bergholz was also with us every day, and even carried buckets of ice for our drinks. A good thing she was there, too. We were shooting in July in 110-degree temperatures. Gwen Somers, who portrayed Yvonne, proved invaluable. There was one morning when we needed someone to ride in on a really evil-looking Harley but, as hard as we tried, we just couldn't locate a bike."

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HOT WAX ZOMBIES

GAELE COMPARAT

NYMPHO FROM HELL: A PLAYBOY BOMBSHELL & HER BLOOPER.

BY MITCH PERSONS

That svelte, bikini-clad temptress, who's vamping the poolside attendant in *HOT WAX ZOMBIES*, may look a bit familiar to readers of *Playboy*. Her name is Gaelle (pronounced *Gael*) Comparat, a frequently-photographed pinup.

"I do work with *Playboy* a lot," says the French native. "It is an ongoing thing. It started when I was living in Lyons. I was a centerfold of the month in the French version of the magazine. I had a big picture on the cover, then they put me on the first page and then an eight-page layout with an interview. On top of that, the issue I was in was 'the champagne issue,' their luxury edition which comes out annually every January. It's sponsored by all the expensive champagne brands and expensive cigars. I've also appeared in other publications in Germany, Spain, and the Netherlands. I'm always being told my picture is in such-and-such a publication.

"I moved to Los Angeles about seven years ago, but my reputation as a model followed me. I'm all the time published by *Playboy* in all their newsstand specials, like their *Books of Lingerie* and girls-of-the-month, girls-of-the-day. I do all of those things.

"It's probably because of my photo layouts in these magazines that led me to getting my first TV role, that of a stripper in the series *PROFILER*. After that, I did a few independent films, and then wound up getting my part in *HOT WAX ZOMBIES* ON WHEELS. I play this Beverly Hills trophy wife—very snooty, very cliché, toasting by a pool. And, like every other person that gets turned into a zombie in the film, I am sex-crazed! I see this poor towel boy who brings me my towel at the pool, and I just jump on him.

"A very funny thing happened during rehearsal. We were doing the swimming pool scene, and I had this gel stuff all over my body to make me look shiny; all the people who get



Gaelle Comparat—whose credits include a "stripper" gig on the *PROFILER* television series—is cast as "the Beverly Hills trophy wife" in *HOT WAX ZOMBIES*. Let's hope her "swimming pool" outtakes are in the film.

turned into zombies are hot waxed, and their bodies are very slick and shiny. Anyway, I'm supposed to hug this guy but, because I was soiled up, he just slipped right out of my arms and fell, fully clothed, into the pool. It's a shame that scene didn't make it into the final cut: it was so hilarious!

"My part as a zombie wasn't the only thing I did in the film. I know how to ride a motorcycle, so I doubled for the motorcycle riding heroine of the picture, Jill Miller, who couldn't ride

Each time you saw a long shot of Jill cycling, that was really me. We had to shoot from a distance, because I am about five foot seven and Jill is about five four.

"After *HOT WAX ZOMBIES* had a premier screening, I got an offer to do a Cinemax movie called *A MURDER OF CROWS* with Cuba Gooding, Jr. and Tom Berenger. My fondest dream is to be a guest on David Letterman's show. He has class. If I ever get to be on his show, I know I've made it." □

HOT WAX ZOMBIES

CATHERINE BREWTON

TV'S ELVIRA CLONE TURNS FROM PRUDE INTO A RANDY ZOMBIE.

BY MITCH PERSONS

At first sight, it's hard to link petite, blonde Catherine Brewton with her Elvira homage. During the past two years, Brewton has appeared as the statuesque, midnight-haired Misty Brew, hostess of WDBB-TV's SHOCK THEATRE.

"A lot of people are really surprised when they see me," she says in her seductive Georgia twang. "They're probably expecting me to be about six feet tall. I guess that's because I have these long legs, as for the dark hair, well, that was a wig."

"I really got engrossed in playing Misty Brew. I just absolutely loved being her. I did a lot of personal appearances, promotions and commercials as the character. I was even invited to be on a local talk show, and I remember I was very nervous. Before SHOCK THEATRE, I had a background in modeling and had won several beauty contests, so I was used to being before the public. But appearing on a talk show just terrified me. I really didn't know what I was supposed to say, so I just wound up thanking various people for helping me in my career. I guess I must have done all right—I didn't freeze up and I was very pleasant. But the next morning I got a call from my agent, and she was simply furious: 'You named all those other people, why didn't you mention me?' I didn't know I was supposed to do that. I was really naive to that whole scene."

"I can't really say that about myself now, though. After SHOCK THE-



Catherine Brewton, whose "Misty Brew" after she hosted WDBB-TV's SHOCK THEATRE, appears her horror film trading to HOT WAX ZOMBIES ON WHEELS.

ATRE ran its course, I left Georgia and came out to L.A. I studied acting. I did a lot more modeling and I developed a more knowing attitude toward the business.

"I knew the going would be tough in

L.A. but, ever since I was a child, I've loved a challenge. A challenge is what makes me want to get up in the morning and go and do something. It makes me more resilient. Knock me down, I come back stronger. I swear, if an audition doesn't go well—or I don't get a part I'm counting on—I just want to go beat my head against the wall and say, 'God, why am I doing this?' But I just bounce right back and try harder the next time."

"I have to be honest here, there were times in my life I could have been anything. I had an opportunity to go to college, but that just wasn't my thing. I could have been a computer programmer, I had experience in business. But I wanted none of those things. I always wanted to perform. For whatever reason, God only knows, I ended up on that road: the challenge to perform just kept me going and going and going."

"That's why I really got so involved with my role in HOT WAX ZOMBIES ON WHEELS. Now, you want to talk about a challenge? I played Nurse Lydia, who's a member of the city council—she's also not very stuffy, uptight woman. She went to the waxing salon run by head zombie Yvonne (Gwen Somers) and got all her bodily hair removed. The wax had an aphrodisiac in it, so it transformed Lydia into a sex-crazed zombie. The disparity between the prim and prissy councilwoman, and the wildly sexy she-monster, definitely gave me a chance to do my most extensive bit of acting to date." □



Guest in HOT WAX, BOWEN'S as "wildly & upfront" **Holly Lynch** (b. w/ Forrest G. Wood, Gwen Stefani & Jon Briddick, *Confessions* Bowen transforms the character "into a non-verbal" **sexploitation** [?]. **More talk about a challenge!** From prior to a wildly sexy she monster! (Photo, Jon Deen. Stylist Elvira Firdus)



HOT WAX ZOMBIES

KIMBERLY ST. JOHN

"SHE WALKS AWAY WITH THE FILM" (& STRUTS INTO THE SEQUEL?).

By MITCH PERSONS

Okay, Gwen Somers and Jill Miller are ostensibly billed as the stars of **HOT WAX ZOMBIES ON WHEELS**, but Kimberly St. John clearly walks away with the picture. Clean-cut and effortlessly sexy, St. John plays slightly amoral Carrie, assistant manager to lingerie shop owner Sharon Talbot (Jill Miller). Swarming over the musculature of a super-stud zombie—and wistfully recounting a previous evening's amorous adventure—St. John's little girl pout and comic timing incarnates Melanie Griffith and Judy Holliday.

"The actual idea of Carrie being curiously seductive was [director] Mike Roush's," admits St. John. "Mike wanted Carrie to be a bit like Shelly Yambo, whom Cynthia Geary played in the **NORTHERN EXPOSURE** television series [1990-95] as a person who appeared to be off in her own little world of pleasure."

"Carrie is the town flirt but in an innocent sort of way. She's not outright sexual, she's more unknowing—very open and free—and she doesn't see anything wrong with being that way. Her seductiveness is not womanly at all; it's more in a cute, innocent, girlish kind of way. It's funny because this girl ends up seducing this huge, macho zombie instead of the other way around. Like the other people, Carrie becomes a sex-crazed zombie but she is the only one who doesn't change a whole lot. She's the same at the end of the film as she is at the beginning."

"One scene that really tells the audience where Carrie fits emotionally is when she walks into the Sharon's lingerie shop, after she's had this wild sex with the big zombie the night before. And Sharon, her best friend, doesn't really know that anything's wrong



"My character is the town flirt. Her seductiveness isn't womanly but more girlish. Like the others, she turns into a sex-crazed zombie... she's the only one who doesn't change a whole lot."

with her. Carrie tells everyone that she's just made love all night and Sharon is like, 'Oh, isn't that pretty normal for you?' and Carrie says, 'Come to think of it, yeah it is.'

"About the sex scene itself, there were two different versions filmed—an R-rated version and a PG-rated version. In the 'R' version I'm topless, and in the 'PG' version, I've got a sheet pulled up to my neck with nothing showing but my face."

"I was a little hesitant at first to do the nudity, that's because acting is

something that I really want to pursue fully. You see, I really want to go very far, and I feel I have a lot of potential as an actress to go where I want to go... and I don't want to be known just for doing nude scenes. But when I was first talking to Mike and the film's writer, Elizabeth Bergholz—and they told me the gist of the story, and how being naked and being involved in hot lovemaking was part of this girl's character—I lost my reluctance. I thought, 'Well, yeah, it's kind of necessary after all.'

"What is intriguing is that Carrie is not just an empty-headed party girl. Quite a bit like Shelly in **NORTHERN EXPOSURE**, Carrie at first seems a bit dingy but she turns out to be a woman with some very definite ideas about her future. Carrie at one time was a pro swimmer and, after being turned into a hot wax zombie, she realizes that the wax allows her to swim a lot faster than she ever could before. She goes to Sharon and tells her that she has decided to train for the U.S. National Swim Team."

"That revelation serves a double purpose. It gives more depth to Carrie, but it also leaves the door open for her character to come back in a sequel... maybe **HOT WAX ZOMBIES ON WHEELS, PART II**."

"Carrie is a pivotal character in the film because she's the first one who gets hot-waxed, and then gets turned into a zombie. All the other townspeople follow her lead. I like roles like that, where a woman has the freedom to change and really be able to influence the way a story goes. Someday I'd also like to be able to portray a tough, sexy, secret spy-type, something like Jennifer Lopez's FBI agent in **OUT OF SIGHT**. In that film, she's sensual and playful at the same time—a character a lot like Carrie."

KIM ST. JOHN

"I'm the first who's hot waxed, the townspeople follow me. I prefer it when women influence a story."

"I really love writing though, and I am doing some heavy thinking about getting into sitcoms. A girlfriend of mine writes for two different comedy shows, and she has given me some hints on how to get there. You just pick one of your favorite shows, and just watch it a lot and write a spec script. And then you shop around for an agent and, hopefully, get a writing job on that sitcom. My favorite show is *MORSHA*, and I've already gotten a script written. Now, if I could just get somebody to represent me..." □

Lib: Kimberly St. John poses for Jen Deen (Stylist: Renee Prince). "Two different versions of the 'wet' scene were filmed—in R-rated and a PG. I do not want to be known just for doing nude scenes."





"Heddy is like therapy to me," explains Green. "It opens me. As long as my body is clean and beautiful, I feel tremendously powerful." (Photo: Jan Dren. Stylist: Nicole Finck)

HOT WAX ZOMBIES

GWEN SOMERS

OPERA STUDENT SINGS BLUES ABOUT HOLLYWOOD HYPOCRISY.

By MITCH PERSONS

I think the money shot in **HOT WAX ZOMBIES ON WHEELS** is somewhere in the movie's fourth or fifth reel: Yvonne Wayne (Gwen Somers), a femme fatale who governs a legion of zombies, is seated on a chopper. Her sunburnt locks cascade over her shoulders as she tips back her head and belts-out a Wagnerian ballad. It's a cue for a posse of "undead" minions to assault heroic Sharon Talbot (Jill Miller) and her coterie of good guys.

"I had never been on a motorcycle in my life until that scene," admits Somers. "It looks like I am really riding that thing, but I am actually being pulled along on a rig. I had trepidations about doing that bit—even with a rig, accidents can happen—but once we got started, I felt the wind on my face, the motion of the vehicle and I had a blast. I also had a chance to exercise my vocal skills, which was fun."

"The idea of having Yvonne sing like a Valkyrie on the rampage was my idea. As a kid, I had an interest in music, mostly rock. I came from a rather nudite background, very cultured and well-educated, and the rock thing was not okay with my family. My mom steered me to classical music. I remember when I came home from school in Boston and sat down at our family piano—I must have been six years old and that instrument seemed huge to me—and I used to sight-read through Mozart's piano sonatas. My mother took me to my first opera when I was in the third grade. All the wonderful pageantry and the drama really excited me. She played me recordings of Joan Sutherland, Beverly Sills, Marilyn Horne. These voices, these splendiferous voices! I was determined to be a lyric coloratura soprano just like they were."

"One day my mom played me a record of Bizet's *Carmen* starring



Somers (l), as a femme fatale who officiates an army of zombie parasites (r), describes her **HOT WAX** character as "Grandiose...Crushed de Ville meets Jessica Rabbit."

Maria Callas. I listened to this woman sing and I thought to myself, 'What an ugly voice!' Some time later, when I was in my teens, I realized, 'Wait a minute!' Callas was assuming the character of a factory girl. She not only had this marvelous, imitable voice, but she was also a consummate actress. That revelation made a profound impression on me."

"I made my own singing debut at the age of 17. It was a full recital, a full 45 minutes of Mozart and in three dif-

ferent languages. Somebody had taped the recital, and I remember listening to that tape and being very, very critical of myself. I thought I sounded terrible. I said, 'This is a coloratura soprano?' Years later, I listened to that very same tape and I was amazed. I was actually quite good."

"I went to Smith University, where I graduated with a music degree. Then I went to New York, but I was really too young to get fully immersed in the lifestyle there. All my opera singer friends were easily eight to ten years older than I was, and I found things just a little overwhelming. I went to Columbia University graduate school, then on to



Aspen, a tour of Europe, the University of Texas at Austin and, finally, Los Angeles. The reason I migrated all over the place is that I was trying to be where all the best music teachers were."

"My coming to Los Angeles had nothing to do with any instructors, however. When I was in Texas, I developed horrendous allergies which were causing difficulty with my voice. I either had to go back to New York, or travel to California. One of the doctors

I was seeing said, 'Gwen, you need to get west of the Rockies.' So I came out here.

"I guess you could say I was a triple threat person. I was into opera, of course, and I did some dance. I think, though, that I always wanted to act. My goal was to marry music with acting, and that's why I was never a very good oratorio singer—because I would have had to stand like a statue. I wanted to emote. My experience listening to Maria Callas, and discovering that a great opera singer could also be a great actress, prompted me to take drama classes at the Herbert Berghoff studios in New York. When I made it to L.A., I started in with the classes again. Unlike most



"I had an enormously good time playing the HOT MAX villainess," says Yvonne W. "She's a bad girl, yes, but a seductive bad girl. Men, and women, just see Tossie!" C. Working moments w/ Jon Briddell



acting students, though, I had a few years experience in the arts behind me. In other words, I didn't walk out of any school at the end with anything I didn't have walking in. I studied for six years with Darryl Hickman, who's a fairly well-known teacher here. Then I studied here, and I studied there, and pretty soon I was studying myself into numbness.

"Now, I'm not saying this about Darryl because he is a marvelous man and a wonderful teacher, and I learned a great deal from him; but, after awhile, I found myself having an issue with most of the other L. A. acting teachers. There is a sort of guru mentality that they have which exists in an alarming degree. I think that there are young actors who stay in classes for years, and never get out there and

actually do anything. So many acting schools, unfortunately, are geared more towards keeping people in classes just so the teachers can make more money. Not everyone does this, but a lot of people do. With that in mind, I really believe that some actors are better off not studying at all.

"Don't misunderstand, I am not saying that every actor should abandon structured schooling, just some. A lot of people need to study. They need a coach of some sort to steer them toward choices, to critique them. But then again, there are many, many wonderfully brilliant actors who've never had an acting lesson in their life. It's the same thing in the opera world. You can be overly coached and overly trained. It almost, but not quite, happened to me. And then there are those with natural talent, who just step out on a stage and start singing

"For my own career, I was attuned enough so that I didn't fall into what I call the 'constant student trap.' I went into doing TV commercials, which then segued into acting in legitimate theater. Someone recommended that I do modeling, which had never really occurred to me, but I did appear in *People* magazine and a few other prestigious publications. I did a lot of movies, about 25 of them. I look very much the leading lady, but I pride myself in the fact that I've done mostly meaty characters roles. I did a supernatural thriller called *THE SUMMONED* for director Mike Tristano. I played a serious role as a witch, kind of a no-nonsense precursor of Yvonne Wayne.

"As to how I got the part of Yvonne, I was contacted by director Mike Roush, himself. The way Yvonne was written, she was kind of Glenn Close—as Cruella de Ville—meets Jessica Rabbit. She was someone who was almost cartoonish in nature, larger than life. She was grandiose, very theatrical, very sexy. She was the ultimate drama queen. Mike felt that because Yvonne's character was so outlandish, he couldn't find someone who could adequately pull the part off. Apparently, he

went to many people asking if they knew somebody who could play Yvonne and, somehow, my name came up. Mike explained the situation to me—This is what we're looking for, can you send us a picture, can you send us a resume?—and so I did. He called me back and said, 'Wow, I'm really impressed, but I'm going to have to pass because you're not a blonde and we want a blonde.' I said, 'Well, Mike, what can I say? We can do things about this, like maybe have me wear a wig. But you're right, I'm not blonde.' But ultimately, even with my auburn hair, Mike called me in for an audition. After I was done, the room was deathly quiet. I figured, 'Well, no use hanging around here, they don't like me.' I walked out to my car and Bill Blum, the associate producer, came running out after me and said, 'Could you please come back?' So I went back in and everybody—writer Elisabeth Berglund, the producers, Mike—said, 'We want you to do this part. We'll get

GWEN SOMERS

"If a film has nudity & costs less than \$30 million, it's demeaning; if Demi Moore bares all, it's art!"

you a long, blonde wig, but we really want you in this role.' Quickest job I ever got.

"My operatic training really came to good use when I took on this part. In opera, you've got a huge stage, an enormous orchestra and your body language has to be rather large. I once played *The Queen of the Night* in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* [*The Magic Flute*]. I saw Yvonne as somebody very similar to that grandiloquent diva of deviousness, only a lot, lot more desirable.

"I had an enormously good time playing this woman. She is a bad girl, yes, but she is a *seductive* bad girl and she just loves being that way. Men can't resist her, women can't resist her. She's got all this come-hither power, like a black widow spider, and she knows how to use it. Whoever steps into this woman's web, she can handle.

"It's hard to say who audiences are going to root for in this film. There is Jill Miller, who plays the all-American good girl, Sharon. She and Yvonne have a constant war going on between them. Audiences could side with Sharon, because she is so determined to stop Yvonne. I don't believe Jill would disagree with me on this but, from a visual standpoint, Yvonne is more appealing. That's part of her charm. The movie's costumer, Alison Achauer, designed these buoyant, sexy, revealing outfits for Yvonne to wear; whereas Sharon, as attractive as she is, is always pretty well covered up.

"Then there's the nudity. It's evident in this film although, for the most part, it's played for laughs. I don't have any uptightness about my body, about being naked in front of the camera. I've done love scenes before. But I refuse to be coerced. When I have decided to do a nude love scene or expose myself—or whatever you want to call it—it was always my decision, and mine alone. Actors are always trying to push the limits, push the boundaries of what they can do. The first time I was asked to uncover myself, I went ahead and pushed that



Gwen Somers—whose credits include *GOOD GIRLS DON'T T* and *INTIMATE SELECTION*—admits that she "had never been on a motorcycle until I shot this *HOT WAX ZOMBIES* scene. I'm actually pulled on a rig."

boundary because, quite honestly, I wanted to see if I could do it. I wanted to see how literally and figuratively naked I could get.

"Actually, nudity to me is like therapy. It frees me. I'm so comfortable with it that, after a while, I feel as if I'm wearing clothes. As long as my body is clean and beautiful, and not icky or disgusting or anything like that, I feel tremendously powerful.

"It's interesting, is it not, that if a film has a budget of less than \$30 mil-

lion, and there is nudity involved, the film is called by a demeaning name; but if Demi Moore decides to bare all in *STRIPTease*, then it's called art. There is such a double standard here in Hollywood. A film only achieves artistic merit when things come out of money. *HOT WAX ZOMBIES ON WHEELS* is a small-budgeted film, it features some nudity, but I defy anybody who sees it to call it by a degrading name. It is a good, classy and, I might add, funny film." □

HOT WAX ZOMBIES

JILL MILLER

A CATFIGHT, AN EXPLODING BRA & A SCENE YOU'LL NEVER SEE.

By MITCH PERSONS

"When I auditioned for the part of heroine Sharon Talbot, I had a very strong feeling that the part was mine," says Jill Miller, recounting her introduction to **HOT WAX ZOMBIES ON WHEELS**. "The audition was so effortless I just went in, read for the part, left and forgot all about it. Perhaps it isn't proper of me to say this, but I considered the film a B-movie, one that wasn't going to be a mainstream hit and I kind of had this 'que sera sera' attitude about it. If they called me to come back, they called me; if they didn't, that was okay, too."

"It so happens that they did call me. I was out, shopping with my mom in a brassiere shop, when producer-director Mike Roush contacted me. I considered the fact that we were shopping for bras, at the same time the call came through, to be a good omen. You see, in the movie, Sharon is the owner of a lingerie shop."

"I seem to have this knack of getting involved with independently-made films. My first part was in a New York production of **BITES OF WINTER**; in that, I played a really mean schoolteacher. Then I produced and starred in a twenty-minute short called **RUBBERNECKS**. That film turned out very well, and we managed to get some well-known people to be in it: Leland Orser from **SAVING PRIVATE RYAN**, Eric Lutes of **CAROLINE IN THE CITY**, Nicole Sullivan from **MAD-TV**. My role was that of a really self-absorbed reporter. She had to be glamorous, no matter what sort of chase was going on around her. She was not a nice person."

"That's why playing Sharon, in **HOT WAX ZOMBIES**, was such a shift for me. Sharon is the embodiment of



Miller's audition: "I considered **ZOMBIES** a B-film, one that wasn't going to be a mainstream hit. If they called me back, fine; if they didn't, that was okay, too."

the all-American good girl. She's smart, she's emotionally strong, she's determined and she has a sense of humor. She's somebody, actually, very much like me."

"It wasn't easy playing her. The woman is competing, both physically and intellectually, with an evil zombie supervixen name Yvonne Wayne (Gwen Somers). Yvonne is a very campy character, much larger than life, almost a caricature. I could have chosen to play Sharon the same way, outdoing Yvonne's villainy with some kind of insincere golly-two-shoes good attitude. But having two antagonists behave exactly the same way makes for pretty dull and unfunny filmmaking. I play my role as a real human being, not an exaggeration."

"Making **HOT WAX** was an experience that I wouldn't have traded for the world, but there were some problems. We had only two weeks to shoot the entire film and they were the hottest two weeks in the month of July, about 117 degrees. A good deal of the indoor action was filmed at Mike Roush's house, which—happily for

everybody else—had central air conditioning. I say 'for everybody else' because I suffer from a variety of allergies, one of them being air conditioning. Plus, Mike is a cat lover and I am also allergic to cats. I had to have tissues plugged up both of my nostrils, which were removed right before we shot."

"Gwen and I headed in our first scene together, which was the fight between Sharon and Yvonne in the radio station. Mike allowed us to choreograph that part ourselves, but he only gave us four minutes in which to do it! It was just like a real fight, where you have a tendency to hold back a little because you're afraid that you're going to get hurt

yourself. That's one of the things Gwen and I came up with to make the scene funny. Then we added the nose pulling, the head bumping, the slapping, the 'dance of death' and, then finally, the kiss. That was a great bit, because Sharon managed to use some of Yvonne's own medicine against her. Of course, all the guys loved that. When it was over, I said, 'There, you've got your lesbian kiss in the film.'"

"One of the funniest scenes in the movie is the one where Yvonne has Sharon strapped to a table, all set to be exposed to the zombie-making hot wax. Sharon then completely flusters Yvonne by shooting her with wood shavings that are stored in this massive exploding bra she's wearing. I didn't know if we could pull off that scene, because that bra was such a wacky prop. Also, there was an expository scene that we didn't shoot. That scene shows Sharon making the contraption. Now that was a classic heroine's journey: she has this moment when she arms herself to prepare herself for triumph. But we ran out of time and that

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THE DIRECTOR

"We were on an extremely tight budget & a 12-day schedule. ROCKY HORROR had a definite influence."

Gwen, who was dressed up in her blonde wig and tight leather outfit, went riding up and down Ventura Boulevard in the San Fernando Valley and found this guy who just happened to be on this big, black Harley. She pointed to him and said, "Hey, can we use this motorcycle?" He looked at her—who wouldn't?—and said, "Yeah, sure." He actually wound up riding the bike in the film.

"If it wasn't for effects like that," adds Blum, "I would have wound up a wreck. One of the jobs that fell to me was putting out the daily call sheets. A call sheet would be showed under a hotel room door, nicely typed up, with who was going to be in what scene, what order the scenes were going to be in, etcetera. To actually do one of those damn things is exhausting. The amount of effort it took me to do it just astounded me, even after I got used to it. If something was missed, that screwed up the next day's shooting."

"Here I have to publicly praise Mike for finding ingenious solutions to some very complex visual problems that would have stymied anyone, including me. He really amazed me on several days by the way he solved some of these difficulties that involved crowds, accidents, gore and wax. I said to him, 'Mike, how are you going to solve this?' and then the next day the solution would be all laid out, and it was very easy to shoot."

"Bill is probably talking here about a number of different vehicular accidents we had to stage," acknowledges Roush. "One was where Yvonne's motorcycle falls over, and a crowd forms around the crash site. As we mentioned before, we were working with certain budget limitations so typical long, tracking shots were out of the question. We filmed the motorcycle scene by shooting underneath a car. By being able to frame the shot with the car in front of us, it limited the depth of field of everything on the street. We were able to maintain the focus on the motorcycle as well as the feet and legs of the crowd, and not the peripheral stuff in the



Gwen Sowers as "evil" supervillain, Yvonne. The wax that she applies to the citizens' bodies has a secret chemical that seeps into their psyches & transforms them into screaming, shrieking mobile automata.

background.

"One thing that HOT WAX ZOMBIES does not skip on, though, is the music. We've pulled out all the stops. We have some strong, underlying spooky/humorous things that happen, and the music reflects this. We have funny music when we need funny music. We have scary music when we need scary music. Bobbie Buontempo produced the score by Ken Jones, which also features original tracks by Bake West, Byrdman and many more."

"Since we've used so much music in our movie, we have been asked if we are trying to pay tribute to THE ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW. It's strange that people should comment on that because, in the early

'80s, I had a part-time job as a projectionist in an art theater in Boulder, Colorado. The theater would show that very same movie every Saturday night, right on the stroke of midnight. It didn't matter if there was 20 inches of snow, and the theater was three-quarters empty, the show went on."

"ROCKY HORROR was very much a part of the time, part of the mentality of the late seventies. It was unique in its use of scores, humor and music, and I think that HOT WAX ZOMBIES follows in that tradition. Now, I don't know if it was done on purpose or not, but just having seen ROCKY HORROR so many times, it definitely had an influence on the way HOT WAX ZOMBIES was shot and, even more so, it had an influence on the way music was incorporated into some of the things going on."

"Audiences may also see some reverential nods to those great old, classic black and white horror films. The whole thing about HOT WAX ZOMBIES is that people lose all their hair, and then find a way to grow it back again; hence, there are a lot of dissolves with tresses and whiskers sprouting up, much as they did when Lon Chaney Jr. turned into THE WOLF MAN. Clever viewers may also notice that some of the lightning bolts that crackle over Yvonne's house bear a singular resemblance to the electricity that permeated the skies in Boris Karloff's FRANKENSTEIN films. That's because, in order to cut a few corners, we went to the Universal stock library and actually pulled shots of lightning bolts from the original BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN."

Gwen Sowers & Jon Riddell may be burning the candle at both ends. "Even the scenes involving sensuality & sex have a grisly humor about them," notes the director.



LESLIE HARTER

DARK NOVA

A NEW BREED OF SCI-FI SIREN, SHE HAS SURVIVED MUTANT SPIDERS, AN APOCALYPTIC FUTURE & INTERACTIVE CD-ROM ALIENS

By CRAIG REID

"Female roles are not often enough explored in science fiction," says Leslie Harter. "In earlier films, women were written-off as squeakers or sidekicks. Perhaps female writers can reinvent the genre by attaching strength, a sense of humor and an IQ to the heroines. I'm utilizing these traits within my DARK NOVA character. I'm playing her as a distaff Snake Plissken."

Born and raised in San Diego, Harter—before she declared Los Angeles as her home five years ago—nailed a six-month modeling gig in Tokyo. "There is so much work over there, it's unbelievable," smiles the actress.



1. Sens gun, Leslie Harter mimics as a female siren (photo: Jan Dean)
 2. Struggling on rail tracks, Harter plays "a distaff Snake Plissken" in DARK NOVA. "I have emotional acting scenes. It's not all shoot-'em-up."

"There's a huge market for Western models in Tokyo. It's tons of work and it was really fun, but I wouldn't go back there. It's not for me now."

Harter subsequently earned visibility in the TV medium, including a few episodes of SILK STALKINGS and appearances on BEVERLY HILLS 90210, CAROLINE IN THE CITY, PACIFIC PALISADES and I MARRIED A MONSTER, the latter a movie of the week. Cast in movies, she has oscillated between supporting player (e.g. BEACH MOVIE, JAILBAIT) and leading lady (e.g. ENCOUNTERS, RESTLESS SOULS).

Emerging from makeup, Harter's black hair is highlighted with red. Clad in green t-shirt and trousers, she shifts into character on the set of DARK NOVA. Slipping on a pair of emerald-colored sunglasses, she loads some ammo into a gun and exchanges dialogue with a bruiser. Director Mike Tristano, who describes his movie as "a retro futuristic actioner," yells, "Cut!" Harter holsters her pistol and swaggers over to my tape recorder. She reminds me that, prior to DARK NOVA, she had al-





"Female roles are not often enough explored in sci-fi. Women are written-off as sidekicks or squeezes. Perhaps female writers can reinvent the genre."

ready been introduced to sci-fi "as a character in *Ground Texas Zero*, which was directed by Dwight Little (*MURDER AT 1600*). It was an interactive CD game for SEGA, and it was a trip. It's actually several different stories about aliens coming to town, and you're not sure if the 'people' are humans or if they're aliens. I lead you through the story and you, as the player, can get shot if you don't know who's who. It was a \$1 million budget, and I'm mostly playing myself. It's the same as making a movie except you look into the lens and talk to the camera. What's fun is you get to shoot a

L: Hunter hopes "the new millennium will afford women more interaction with sci-fi." **R:** The actress as *DAVE NORA*. "My character is the whole movie! It was a very physical role."



scene over and over with different options. We shot four different endings. We didn't use blue screen either, it's all physical."

I ask Harter about her casting in *DARK NOVA*, the actress' second genre-related project. Tossing her hair back, she responds, "Actually, the person who brought me in had hired me for the CD-ROM game. I'm basically doing the same thing, a heroine running around shooting guns. But this character is the whole film. I have four really good emotional acting scenes, so it's not just all shoot-em-up. My character's past as Dark Nova, and her link to the present as alter ego Nova, also excited me. It's all about different clothes and different characters. And it was physical, even down to getting to the tits..."

"We shot at an eight-story building and everything was on a different floor. So we were running up and down for 14 hours a day. My room is on the seventh floor, we'd shoot on the second, wardrobe was on the sixth floor and makeup on the fifth. Then, after I got wounded, I have the 'getting back into shape' scenes where I do pushups and pull-ups, things I've never really done before so I had to work on my arms quite a lot."

Harter is moonlighting on the boards, performing in the theatrical production of *Shoe Men*. Written by actor Jeff Daniels (*DUMB AND DUMBER*), the play has earned Harter some laudatory reviews ("Perfect and funny portrayal by Leslie Harter as the snaky, sexy 'tart of the town,'" opined one critic) ("I play a gas station attendant," giggles Harter, "—a very sexy gas station attendant. The play takes place in the mind of a wife in prison, she killed her husband because he was having an affair. The play's title character sells shoes, hence, I wear a different pair of shoes in each consecutive scene of the play. It's a subtle little detail.")



1. Posing for *Jen Jones* 2. As a heroine of the future, Harter challenges *Astray* Lloyd in *DARK NOVA*. "Leslie was not accustomed to action scenes," recalls director Mike Truiano. "She put lots of effort into it. Beautiful, a hard worker."



She notes that the significant difference between "acting on a movie sound stage and a theatrical stage is the audience; you're so dependent on their reaction, especially in comedy. Friday nights are the toughest, audiences are tired and maybe don't want to be there. We've had quiet houses and think it's not working but,

afterwards, the audience says they loved it, they're just not expressive. But in film, you don't get a reaction, you just shoot it and go on to the next thing."

"Of all the acting I've done, I've enjoyed this stage character the most because it's been a while since I've done comedy. What is funny is when we're backstage,

waiting for our cues, we're playing backgammon or on the phone. It's not like, 'Oh, I have to prepare to act' like on film sets. I roll the dice and go on stage. The pressure and concentration is really different."

Is projecting sex appeal on film less delicate than its theatrical invocation? "I've done nudity in film, it's not tough but it's not the most pleasant thing... actually, I'd rather shoot someone. In retrospect, they're actually the funnest things that I've done—meaning, I just start laughing. I did this series called *WOMAN*, where I did my first nude scene and it was kind of shocking. The point is not about anybody touching you. What you really think about is what your body looks like. It's like you're thinking, 'Are they seeing fat? What are they seeing?' You think about sucking in your gut and positioning yourself to look good. The *WOMAN* show had a female producer, female director, female cameraperson. Not that it matters because you're still naked..."

"Does that mean your on-screen lover was female?" I inquire.

"No, no, no, no," Harter mutters with some exasperation. "I would pass on that. I do have my limits. I've done it all but I've turned things down..."

"Now in theater, for a live audience, you're much more aware of being sexy in front of an audience. You have to own it more, especially because the character communicates sex appeal by the way she walks and talks. It's all very sexy, and you have more fun with it because you have to strut around all the time, furthermore, you can't drop the charade for even a second. I think of it as a lark because I would never strut around like that...at least I don't think I would [laughs]. But that's the fun of acting, I can do anything I want to that I can't in real life."

She abridges "a career gaffe" to "doing this film

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THE MAKING OF DARK NOVA

A SCI-FI FILM, WHICH FORECASTS SEX & VIOLENCE IN THE FUTURE,
TURNS INTO A FORUM ABOUT ETHNICITY & THE CASTING COUCH.

By CRAIG REID

I park at Lacy Street Studios, which is only a stone's throw from Lacy Street Cabaret. The locale looks more like a New York City warehouse than a sterile Hollywood sound stage. Corrugated metal walls straddle ruptured buildings, and a labyrinth of large tubular pipes stretch into nowhere. Discolored, plastic window covers are animated by a dry breeze. It's a compatible environment for **DARK NOVA**, described as "apocalyptic, post-millennium sci-fi." A bright, yellow '67 Camaro and a yellow Suzuki 450 are the set dressing for an alley scene. My attention is diverted by the arrival of principal player Leslie Harter, who is cast as the film's namesake, Dark Nova. Her physical appearance prompts a flashback to a cool '70s song, *Green Eyed Lady*. She gently strokes a gash above her right eye. "I got that from being shot," Harter explains. "I was hit by a gun clip on the left side of my face. In this film, that's mostly what I do: shoot guns. I enjoy shooting and often go the range [poases]... but I have no interest in owning a gun."

Harter tells me that she's playing a dual role: "I'm Nova and Dark Nova. Nova is a former musician for hire trying to live a normal life as the owner of a punk rock club. My character is tormented by a past in which she accidentally caused the death of a child. My sister Zoe and I were orphans. I've raised her and she's the only constant in my life but that's jeopardized by her drug habit, which starts the whole problem."

As she's dragged into makeup, Harter quickly adds, "Nova has a strong



Leslie Harter as China, a sexy psychopath. "She sees weak people as bugs & strong people make her angry 'to her, men and & women are objects to hurt or seduce, or both.'"

code of honor and responsibility, and is motivated by what is 'right.' When things go bad for Zoe, I revert back to my former hit man self, Dark Nova. At this point, I don a blonde wig, a pair of mismatched, David Bowie-like eyes and now use my Baretta for what I believe is right, a force for justice.

The film's producer, Ted Fox, enthusiastically whispers, "**DARK NOVA** is a stylized piece rather than a realist story. The overall feel of the characters

and the movie is an alternative, punk rock, rave culture world that feels like an underground comic book. And, yes, Nova is a badass: tough, tall and beautiful."

Director Mike Tristano blurts, "Nova is like the female version of *The Crow* but transplanted into a retro-style, action, sci-fi film."

Back to the plot: Nova and Zoe are extorted by corrupt police captain Maxie. If the siblings don't make good on Zoe's heavy debts, he'll kill 'em all. Zed, Nova's lover, suggests they develop a working rapport with Bishop, a criminal with whom he used to conspire. Bishop offers them an opportunity for a minor robbery, where the proceeds would settle their debts. Morally and financially bankrupt, Nova hesitantly agrees. One successful caper later, they learn that the booty is a cache of street drugs. Nova is betrayed by Bishop's cronies, including the tiny, impulsive China and her lethal lesbian lover, Jade.

A couple of pyrotechnical effects later, Nova appears to expire in a blast discharged by the bad guys. But she's rescued and nursed back to health by a mystical derelict named Jasper. Dark Nova enters the picture: adjusting to a modified lifestyle—Zed is now hot for Zoe—she launches a vengeful scheme against Bishop and his cronies.

Back on set, Jade amorously pins China against a wall with a leg lock. They're preparing for their first round of face-to-face intimacy. A blonde Angie Diamond ("Jade") is attired in black short-shorts, bra and a transparent, glittery sweater. Adhering to the new wave Generation surge, spike-beaked



Jazzy as Jade, Playboy model Angie Diamond raps about movie nudity. "I have no problem with backshots. When I saw a DARK NOVA scene where my chest was exposed, I'm like, 'Gee, gross!' I'm critical of myself!"

Linda Kim—a Korean-American actress who's clad in hot pants—is cast as smoldering evildoer, China.

By the time she turned 16, Kim was declared a child tennis prodigy who ranked 20th in the nation. Born in Maryland and raised in Alabama, she eventually earned a business major at Boston University. During Desert Storm, she was stationed in the Persian Gulf to serve as a fitness coordinator. So how did acting get into the picture? "At age 16," she replies, "I just got burnt out on the tennis circuit. I started out real young playing and following my mom around. Seven months after learning tennis, I was the state champion. Before I knew it, it was a major commitment and it just snowballed. My father was pretty much detached from it, but I think my mom was disappointed that I didn't turn pro...but she accepted it."

"So when I got to Boston on a tennis scholarship, I started doing modeling. My interest in acting grew as I filmed commercials and hung around theater people. I moved out to L.A. in 1995 to be an actress. Wow! Major culture shock. Everybody seems to somehow know someone they can introduce you to. You have to be careful about who is legit or not. It was shocking."

"I was lucky. I got an agent the first week I was out here. First thing I did was an exercise video for Reebok and soon got my first acting role on a movie called DIVAS. I was among the girls who wanted to be

one of a four-girl band. I had to sing, and the big joke was that I was horrible. I can't sing...[Asks a Korean folk song]. See? I'm not a good singer."

She subsequently surfaced on a string of TV shows, what with PARTY OF FIVE, CHARMED, SISTER SISTER, BEVERLY HILLS 90210, V.I. TROOPERS, etc. "They're all speaking parts," Kim recounts. "On FAME L.A., I was a teacher. I played a stripper on N.Y.P.D. BLUE but I consider doing a guest role on Steve Bochco's TOTAL SECURITY series as my first big break. I did it with Jim Belushi. It helped my career in terms of confidence. The biggest film I've done so far is Gregg Araki's SPLENDOR, a sort of 90210 on acid."

Acknowledging the dichotomy of China, her DARK NOVA vixen, the actress describes the character as "one moment, a cute, little teenage rave girl, innocent and bubbly—the next moment, she's pulling a gun and blowing people away. She goes off on killing

LINDA KIM

"She is chaos, the bad girl. High on drugs, life & sex, she is a metaphor for the modern woman."

people and loves to use her sex appeal for violent ends. China sees weak people as bugs waiting to be squashed, and strong people make her angry. To her, men and women are objects to hurt or screw. Or both...

"She's chaos, the sex symbol, a bad girl and is always high on something like drugs, life and sex. Everything she does is 100% negative. She's one extreme or the other, there's no middle ground. In a sense, she is a metaphor for the new modern woman: sexy, deadly, does anything and everything."

"I actually partially identify with China—not the drugs but her work ethic. I'm still not in a position to have scripts left at my door, and I have to work my ass off. It's tough being an actor because a lot of our careers are out of our control, and in the hands of others. You search for ways to make yourself better but there's a large gray area compared to a 9 to 5 job. So I relate to working hard, being aggressive and hustling. I don't sit home waiting for the phone to ring."

"On one hand, DARK NOVA is a big step because it's a lead, a fun character and I've never done anything as extreme as her. It's a good stretch. Yes, I have a 'girlfriend' in the film and that was a bit of a struggle for me before I agreed to the role; only had one big mouth-to-mouth kiss and it was like kissing a cabinet [laughs]. It's nothing to do about Angie Diamond being a good or bad kisser, it's the way we did

it and I didn't let myself get freaked out. There's nothing wrong with sexual content or nudity, but doing a lesbian scene was difficult for me. I'm sure many actors cross this bridge in their career—are uncomfortable about nudity and not sure if they should do it. You never know if it'll hurt or help your career. No regrets doing the film, it was a learning experience. I just don't want to be typecast. The bottom line? Nothing negative comes from a film unless you make it that way."

DARK NOVA: Angie Diamond conspires w/ Paula Tooke & Marco Rodriguez. "I don't need the hassle & pressure of a producer liking me," says Diamond.



I shift the conversation to Kim functioning as an Oriental actor in Hollywood. "First of all, you mean Asian actor," she notes. "Ten years ago, we were Oriental actors but—like everything else in today's society, political correctness dictates—we're Asians. On one hand, it's an advantage because we're an emerging market; agents are more apt to sign up an Asian, even with nothing on her resume, rather than another dime-a-dozen blonde babe. In Hollywood, there are millions of cute blue-eyed blondes. On the other hand, there are more parts for the blonde and fewer roles for Asians. And this is compounded with the Hong Kong actresses coming in. They come over and get leads in studio films. They may be established over there, but it's still frustrating because things are already tight here and it makes things more difficult."

"It's funny you ask about stereotype roles. I've been fortunate not having to do them, but it seems the Asians who consistently work are the ones who do the degrading, stereotype roles. They're criticized for that, but that's unfair because there isn't much out there and you can't turn down work because someone else will take it in a heartbeat. Even non-Asians criticize them. You can't make everyone happy. How many people like Clinton?"

"I've been surrounded by tae-kwon-do [a Korean form of martial arts] my whole life and still train. Perhaps that's a link to my culture. But if one is Korean-Korean, you have to respect your elders, no matter what the situation. And if you meet someone older than you, you have to do what they say, not just socially but in business. One must earn respect, but in Korea, you're given it. I can't give into that. I'm not disrespectful, but I'll always voice my opinion."

Any final comments? "I've heard Oliver Stone likes Asian women," smiles Kim. "Oliver, call me."

One rehearsal later, Ted Fox introduces me to Angie Diamond. "Angie plays Jade, who is China's sub and in many ways her opposite," advises the producer. "Jade is dreamy and spaced-out, China is hyper-energized and aggressive. However, Jade is just as dan-



DARK NOVA. Linda Kim as a victim who "learn[s] to use her sex appeal for violent ends." Kim notes, "Agents are more apt to sign up an Asian than another blonde babe." **R.** Angie Diamond with screen lover Kim and Marco Rodriguez.



gerous as China. Though she moves languidly and acts like life is but a dream, she shoots people without noticing it."

Born in San Francisco and raised in Oklahoma, Diamond enrolled at the University of North Carolina to study marketing, but she dropped out, arrived in Los Angeles circa 1994 and got modeling gigs. "I got into acting because I was dating a name actor," she says. "No names. It's good to date a working actor [laughs]. His roommate was an acting coach and I attended his class, and he gave me great feedback. And I believed him. Which is tough in Hollywood. There's a lot of people out here who make promises, but what I've learned is that you meet those kind of people out at night: real working people in the industry are too busy to be going out at night."

Diamond landed the role of Jade only two weeks after submitting her headshot. "The character barely talks to anyone but her girlfriend, China, to whom she's subservient. You might think she's totally submissive, but she kills people and laughs about it."

Frankly, I can't relate to her but I created a background for Jade. I attribute her psychosis to being beaten as a child, and growing up in the streets as an abused teen. None of this is on-screen but, inside, I have to create an understanding of why she kills without caring."

Raising a one and a half year old son named Jagger, the actress admits to "having friends who feign not having boyfriends. But I don't give that impression because I don't need the hassle of a producer, or someone on set, hitting on me. I've run into that. A man, who told me that I would have to sleep my way to the top, and that I'd have to start with him. I was disgusted and never spoke with him again. He's well known in the industry. The weird thing about it is when you see his other clients, it makes you wonder what they have done."

An avid poker and blackjack player, Diamond's other pastimes include—no kidding—volunteer work for the homeless. She is also a devout Christian, which is a catalyst for a speculative conflict: how does Diamond feel about her son eventually screening her nude scenes or paying through her Playboy portfolios?

"God, I hope he doesn't," she nervously giggles. "I want him to know about his spirituality but I'm not going to hide anything about myself to him. I'll be honest and tell him that those were my choices and he will make his."

"Personally, I don't think it's necessary to do nudity and I'd rather not do it, strange when you consider I did the cover for Playboy's Blondes, Brunettes and Redheads edition and a spread for 'The Great Model Lingerie Search.' DARK NOVA is my starting role and it does have brief nudity. I just don't want all the rules I get to be based on nudity—the hot blonde with a great body. I want to progress. This is a step."

When I ask her how she prepared herself for the film's lesbian liaison, Diamond replies, "Linda and I spoke about it and hung out on the set together. We were both nervous. All my scenes are with her, and I had to constantly be all over her. We both signed the contract and knew it was coming. We had to kiss and I'm like, 'Pretend

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"I first broached sci-fi in 'Ground Texas Zero,' an interactive CD game that was shot for \$1 million. It wasn't unlike making a movie, except you talk to the camera."

called **EDGE OF INNOCENCE** and it was set to be released at the same time as **Martin Scorsese's AGE OF INNOCENCE**. So they renamed it **JAILBAIT**. I'm like, 'Gee, thanks guys, great name.' It was my first film, I had a blast and it had nothing to do with jail. I was the bad guy's girlfriend."

Harter, who pledges her leisure time to the Wildlife Way Station, makes a phone call to the charity ("I live with two dogs."). As she swings into the parking lot, shielding her eyes from the broiling sun, the actress searches her pockets for a car key. "**DARK NOVA** is a step up due to its quality of character," Harter explains. "But the ultimate goal is obvious. If you want to eat, you want to sample the best restaurant. If you want to act, you want to graduate into the best films with the best production values and the best actors surrounding you. It's about elevation." Fishing a key ring from her blouse, I notice it's emblazoned with two words: **Movie Star**.

Epilogue. Six months later, Harter's alliance with science fiction has far from eroded; for the present, it's her professional sustenance. "I've been cast as a lab technician in a film alternately titled **COBWEBS** and **SPIDERS**. Experimenting with DNA, I collide with mutant spiders—chaos ensues!" □

"In theaters, in front of an audience, you're more aware of projecting sex appeal than on film. You have more fun with it because you shut around it can't drag the chords for a second."



Honey Lauren

She's been called the "female Christopher Walken." Tallying roles in no less than 28 movies—which optionally debut on movie screens or Blockbuster shelves—she's played everything from soap opera to science fiction. Her name is Honey Lauren, though she prefers to be addressed as Honey Gay Lauren ("I really like my middle name"). Smiling ear-to-ear, she pegs **MEN CEY BULLETS** as "the film that has offered me, by far, my most challenging and controversial part to date." Helmed by Tamara Hernandez, the film's cast includes Jeri Ryan (**STAR TREK VOYAGER**) and Trish Elliot.

BULLETS reverses traditional gender roles within a dysfunctional relationship: Lauren plays the aggressor, a role she attacked with relish. "My character is a very brilliant woman," the actress explains, "but she has the maturity of a 16-year-old girl. She only goes out with very young men and treats them horribly. I'm the abuser." The description is understated; externalizing her rage, the hellion rapes her teenage boyfriend.

The film kindled controversy at various screenings; it also earned awards at the SXSW, Williamsburg Brooklyn, and Chicago Underground film festivals. "I think audiences both love and hate the film," relates Lauren. "It's very disturbing and it doesn't have a happy ending. Some people were like, 'How dare you show this?' They just got really angry about it. Others, how-

ROLES INCLUDE A VAMPIRE & ALIEN. CO-STARRING WITH JERI RYAN, SHE'S NOW A HELLCAT.

By Sue Fenberg & Judd Hollander

ever, are crazy about it. We've even had people follow us from film festival to film festival like groupies."

The film is a significant departure from Lauren's less provocative roles. She was cast in four installments of the **VICE ACADEMY** franchise, which were shot over a four-year period (1994-'98). The series was B-movie burlesque of the low-brow **POLICE ACADEMY** series. "VICE ACADEMY was very popular with the prison population," Lauren laughs. "Oh man, those guys went crazy. I got lots of fan letters in that area and it was fun. I think six were made and I was in some of them. And you always assigned the same role, so it was kind of like doing a TV series."

Lauren landed recurring roles on soaps, including **THE YOUNG AND THE RESTLESS** and **DAYS OF OUR LIVES**. Earning an acting apprenticeship on sitcoms (**DREAM ON**, **THE NANNY**, etc.), she nailed work in feature-length films (e.g. **OUT FOR JUSTICE**). Between movies, her stage work drew a Drama Logue award (Best Actress), a San Francisco Drama Critic Circle award and an L.A. Weekly (Best Actress) award.

"Basically, I am from Los Angeles, but I also lived in New York while growing up," says Lauren. "I did spend what I call the 'formative years' in Los Angeles. You see, L.A. is a very unusual place; it's Pinnat Shovitz. And you grow up there with a strong set of values that you're always fighting. There was that need to look blonde and






"Aliens took over humans in *THE HIDDEN*, and the characterizations were hysterical. I played a girl who is possessed and turns into a kind of sex freak."

pretty red, of course, I had white skin and no tan and black curly hair. I was the opposite of the norm. I felt a kind of alienation growing up and it can be pretty damaging. I worship to be approachable, I really do. It's not easy being not like everybody else, but I tried to make being different work to my advantage." By the time she had turned 16, Lauren was "emancipated" from both high school and Los Angeles. She moved to San Francisco and enrolled in A.C.T., a theater college.

"I've always wanted to be an actress. My parents were very poor growing up, and didn't have the time or money or desire to help me, other than maybe give me an acting class. They didn't

Lauren strikes a pose for *Can Can*: "I think people just naturally give me weird roles. I'm happy to do 'em. I'm pragmatic, I do anything I like." It is Francis Ford Coppola's *DRACULA*.





"I was called back to DRACULA just to do special effects stuff. Coppola is amazing. Time is on his side; others just don't have that luxury."

take me around to auditions or arrange for me to get head shots, or help me find an agent, even though I begged them. Looking back on it now, I see they didn't have the time to do that because they were working like crazy to support us. I did plays and danced, but didn't get to pursue it the way L.A. children pursue it because my parents couldn't do that for me. It wasn't until I was 16 that I got to do it professionally, and pursue it the way I wanted to. But it was hard."

Lauren's physical deviation from the generic "Hollywood blonde sexpot" proved to be a professional catalyst. "Because I look different, it's really hard to typecast me. I look very feminine, but I don't look like a lot of people and I think everybody pro-

Lauren posing for Jim Deen. "Growing up in L.A., there was that need to look blonde & pretty. I had white skin, no tan & black curly hair. I was the opposite of the norm." B. With Jeff Ryan in *MILK CHERRY BULLETS*.



jects their own idea of what they think I am onto me. One director may see me and think, 'Gosh, she is so sexy' and another may think, 'She is such a nerd.' They all have their own ideas of what they think I am. Besides, I've never had any implants. I look like a real person and I don't think they're used to seeing that. It really is unusual to see someone without plastic stored somewhere within her body."

Among her genre credits was a role in *THE HIDDEN*, a \$4.5 million sci-fi sleeper that turned into a cult hit (The Washington Post admired the 1987 film's "punk soulfulness...it's one of the most satisfying genre films to hit the streets in a while."). "THE HIDDEN had something to do with aliens taking over human bodies, and the characterizations that come out of them are really hysterical," recounts Lauren. "I played a girl who's possessed and becomes a sex freak."

The actress was also cast as a vampsy "peep show girl" in Francis Ford Coppola's *DRACULA*. "The thing Coppola does that I like is he tries lots of different things. There was a time when, after I was finished on the film, I was called back just to do special effects stuff because he wanted to try it. He wanted to know what it would look like to see a woman walk through a column, or pop out of a wall or blend into the couch. He had the special effects people do all kinds of stuff with us. It was like a playground. I think that's why his stuff is so amazing, because he has time to do anything he wants. A lot of people don't have that luxury."

She also performed in *TRANCE*, which is currently in post-production. Tane McClure, *FF* cover woman (6-8), produced and starred in the film noir thriller. The supporting cast includes Bruce Abbott (RE-ANIMATOR), Lauren Hays (THE ALIEN FILES) and Martin Kove. "That film is rather



Lauren, a self-proclaimed "romantic woman," plays stupor "Gloria" (l) in *MEN IN BLACK: GY BULLETS*. "I think I made her into a real person, not a bitch or sociopath."

interesting," opines Lauren. "I played a woman who, during the 1930's, was a magician's assistant. Something went wrong during the act and she was killed during the performance. And she has been forever haunted by the experience, living it over and over again."

"Adhering to the *DRACULA* theme, I also did a series of vampire trading cards. I know that sounds so silly but the money was good. We were dressed up as vampires with the sets and the costumes and teeth and everything." The cards segued into a comic book series, prompting Lauren to be booked as a guest at fan-boy conventions ("Boy, what a strange world that was"). She collected additional revenue "with 'body part' modeling. It's a big business, they actually have agencies just for that."

Lauren is confident that *MEN IN BLACK: GY BULLETS* will validate her allegiance to unconventional roles. It was during production of this film that she was christened "the female Christopher Walken." She regards the description as "both flattering and ironic. I saw *THE DEER HUNTER* when I was a teenager. I wasn't even old enough to see the movie, but I got in. I saw

Chris Walken's work and said, 'This is amazing.' I felt so changed after I left there. He was a strong influence on my work for years. I also very much admire actors Harvey Keitel and Meryl Streep."

"And that's what made it even more ironic when I prepared for the film. I thought about Harvey Keitel's work in *BAD LIEUTENANT*. I don't know where they got Christopher Walken from, but I'm blown away with the comparison. His work is amazing."

Applying a Bettie Page wig to her locks as she spits venom, "Gloria"—Lauren's femme fatale in *MEN IN BLACK: GY BULLETS*—hardly solicits sympathy from the audience. But the actress was more preoccupied with plunging into Gloria's psyche. "I think that I've managed to make her a real person. She's not a sociopath or a bitch by any means. She's just a very disturbed woman and you may walk away feeling sorry for her. She'll hit someone, and then cry afterwards. And also I hope this movie will make a difference in the way people deal with domestic violence."

As we concluded our interview, Lauren enlightened me that she had just been

cast in *GIRAFFE IN A JUNGLE*. One of the film's frills is its location: the Big Apple. "New York is my town. For some reason, I find myself much happier there. These days, I commute between L.A. and New York, mine is a bi-coastal vacation."



Finally, I query why she never took a stage name. I mean, "Honey" hardly evokes The Bard. "What's really funny, my stepfather's name was Goldberg," recalls Lauren. "And so, for a while, I was Honey Goldberg. And I've met a lot of people who are nicknamed Honey, but I really do like my name. My mother was definitely an individualist. When you have a kid, you have a responsibility to them—because kids are their names. A strong name is important. But I don't know if our parents really thought about that when we were growing up. My name was almost 'Zabrina.' Thank God they didn't go with that! But they ended up with Honey, because I think they needed a name that meant sweet or something."

Honey Gay Lauren acknowledges it's not easy surviving in L.A. as a dissenter. "There are only a few actresses who broke through the mold—Lili Taylor, who isn't like everybody else. There are people who appreciate nonconformity and can get past it. I think people just naturally give me weirdo roles, but I'm happy to do them. I don't mind and I'm pragmatic, I'll do anything I like." □



Monique Parent:
"Though I like the
idea of working all
the time, I've
realized the kind
of film I need to
do. I need to work
on films that give
me a personal
sense of
satisfaction."

MONIQUE PARENT

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sition includes **THE KEY TO SEX**, **CROSS COUNTRY** and **CLUB WILD SIDE I & II**—is **BLOODTHIRSTY**, about an introspective blood parasite. "Every single person on that show gave a shit. We all really tried to do the best we could. That's how I want to work. I don't want to work with people who don't care. We're not always going to make the best thing there is, but at least we can try."

Current projects include **DEAN QUIXOTE** and **THE PORNOGRAPHER**. In the former, Parent plays Braveheart, the distaff **BRAVEHEART**, replete with war paint and mounting an obviously fake horse. "In **THE PORNOGRAPHER**," she recalls, "I had a monologue that was six and a half minutes long and was able to do it in a single take."

Parent would like to exile memories of past videos to hargrin him. "I can go to an audition right now and, despite having done close to 50 B-movies, the casting people don't even know I exist. I've had to swallow my pride a little when I decided to start over. But I think it's worth it because I don't want to just be doing this right now—I want to be doing this for the rest of my life." □

DARK NOVA

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kiss me." So we do take 2, take 30. I mean come on, guys [laughs]. It's kind of embarrassing. It was weird doing a love scene with a woman." Called back to the set, Diamond adds, "I try hard not to be judgmental. None of us are perfect." □

JILL MILLER

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scene never made it into the film. I loved the lines that **Yasmine** used on me. When she opened my blouse and there are these two huge mountains, she said, "What's with the boobs, there?" Then she says, "Oh, these things always look better in the catalogue, but it certainly shows a marked lack of self-esteem." It's one of the funniest lines in the film. The problem was, people were laughing so much, I don't think they even heard it." □

LETTERS

ASLEEP AT THE PRESS!

Our apologies to those confused by our last issue, Vol 8 No 18, May 19, cover story on ZORRITA. Four pages were printed out of order on all copies. The page 18 sidebar on Shauna O'Brien can actually be found on page 49! The last page of the cover story, which should have been on page 23, can be found on page 47! The last page of the centerfold story on the "Bureau of Surrender Cinema," can be found on page 18! Berry for any inconvenience! Like Malcolm McDowell in A CLOCKWORK ORANGE, our press supervisor has been sentenced to watch Surrender videos with her eyes propped open until she learns her lesson!

ERO-HORROR AUTKUNT?

I want to tell you all what a nice layout you did on my interview, beautiful colors, quality, etc. I've been called a few things but "erotic horror auteur" is a new one.

I'd like to make a serious correction, though, and I'd sincerely appreciate it if you'd print it in your Letters section: Jim Wynorski had absolutely nothing—I mean zilch, nada, nichts—to do with writing about the story or screenplay for SORCERERS, despite his shameless published claims to the contrary. Roger Corman gave him the credit for reasons I can't even imagine, and without my knowledge or consent.

Jack Hill
jackhill@earthlink.net

"BLACK SCORPION"

Whatever happened to Roger Corman's BLACK SCORPION television series (7-16)? The series was created in 1996 and, so far, I haven't seen it in syndication. Any chance that the Sci-Fi Channel will be picking it up?

Frank T. Bolapp
fbolapp@hotmail.com

I was wondering if Roger Corman has found a home for his BLACK SCORPION show? If not, I suggest the Sci-Fi Channel or HBO.

Nail A. Burns
lynghild, MA

FF 7:16 was really outstanding.

ing. Please inform us about BLACK SCORPION's current status. Will the pilot, or any of the episodes, soon be available on video?

A. Strum
Northport, NY

[We forwarded your queries to the series' comedy cost. Athena Massey ("Hurricane") vowed to "keep FF readers enlightened. Right now, I'm looping VITAL PARTS, a made-in-the-Philippines thriller that I also shot for Roger (Corman). I'll ask around." Show Marks ("Babette") was advised "the series is still being shopped around." But another industry insider claims, "Negotiations between Roger Corman and Shauntelle broke down: Roger wanted too much money." We'll be sure to grill Michelle Lavelle, who plays the title role in the series, when we rendezvous with the actress next week.]

Shae Marks' centerfold story (7-17) sent my temperature rising: a hotty who's into John Woo and science fiction flicks! She is my #1 defense for cloning. I'm just disappointed her coverage was so limited in the subsequent BLACK SCORPION cover story. Shae mentioned that she may model as the embodiment of a "jungle girl" comic book character. Is this still in the works?

Curtis Walker
San Francisco, CA

[According to Dave Neelzer, president of Wicked City Studios, "We developed a female fatale, called 'Raid Jungle Queen,' exclusively for Shae. We rendered her into Shae's exact physical likeness. The character reoccurred pop-ups in our P.J. Sasouniah illustrated series as P.J.'s nemesis. Think of her as a dancette Lex Luther." Ms. Marks volunteered to model as the tropical temptress "because I wanted to sample a whole new medium. I love the art and, even better, this character is literally designed to kick butt." We'll preview Ms. Marks' alter ego in a forthcoming issue.]



Shae Marks, a player in Andy Hinkle's *Islands & Sirens* plus RETURN TO SAVAGE BEACH, has crossed over to the comic book medium.

SAPPHISM & SCI-FI

As an avid reader of FF, I'd like to cite some shoe-ins for your 2000 listing of the "50 Bestest" Carrie-Anne Moss, Heather Donahue and Sigourney Weaver. All are photogenic enough to be FF cover women and, more significantly, each was an excellent interviewee. They're all rule models. I also admire actress/FF staffer Roxanne Michaels and was extremely impressed with her "Sapphism & Sci-Fi" article (8-4). What are Roxanne's latest assignments? And which actress is her favorite femme fatale?

Karen Tyler
Burke, VA

[Michaels' modeled as Lara Croft for two front covers of Tomb Raider [Image Comics], painted by the legendary Joe Jusko. "Her favorite femme?" I share your enthusiasm for Carrie-Anne Moss. Her MA TRIX character, Trinity, was the strongest woman in Cinema '90. Beyond her physical dexterity, she showed strength with her emotional reserve and mental aptitude. A very cool chick." Roxanne is currently writing FF's coverage of Reposeur comics.]

FAN CLUBS

Send self-addressed and stamped envelopes for reply.

Angelie Almandare
www.angelie.com

Sara Barrett (8-10)
www.sarahbarrett.com

Heidi Christine (page 7)
www.heidichristine.com

Barbara Crampton (8-7)
www.barbaracrampton.net

Denise Duff (8-2)
www.deniseduff.com

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www.dita-is-a-stress.com

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Roxanne Michaels (7-15)
e-mail: scifiscene@aol.com

Jill McWhirter (7-11)
e-mail: jillmccwhirter@hotmail.com
P.O. Box 6308
Beverly Hills, CA 90212

Misty Mundree
P.O. Box 447
Rampwood, NJ 07466

Shauna O'Brien
www.wow97.com

Tamie O'Connell (8-4)
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